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PILGRIMAGE THROUGH PRAYER

Prayer Meeting Pilgrims ; The 'Trio'

Pramatha Lal Sen

Benoyendra Nath Sen

Mohit Chandra Sen



Beni Madhab Das, M. A.

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Homage

THIS volume is an humble homage to the sacred memory of my revered father,—an example of *Sadhak Grihastha-Bairagi* :

WHO, has left beautiful picture of eternal Pilgrimage Through Prayer :

WHO, an unweary pilgrim, with prayer as his life-breath—was a faithful comrade of the Prayer Meeting Band, portrayed herein :

WHO, always wore a heavenly smile, the vision of which has been the unfailing inspiration in my venture :

I feel happy in the hope that the effort of an unskilled and unworthy hand, for this publication—a beacon-light for pilgrims of to-day and to-morrow—will please my saintly father.

To him the publisher's devout

Pranam

Publisher's Apologia

Sri Pulin Behari Sen, late of the Biswavarati Publication Department, asked me for a short life-sketch of Prof. Mohit Chandra Sen, for the contemplated series of short Biographies of persons who were intimately associated with the poet Rabindra Nath Tagore, in his Shantiniketan Brahmachariya Vidyalaya at its early stage. I considered it as a privilege to be of some use to him, in this connection.

This pleasant work came to me as God's blessing and I accepted it as a sacred duty to perform. It was pleasant, because I had to revive old memories of my early life touching on Mohitmama's unique personality. The deep regard of my parents for their dear and greatly revered *Nalooda*, *Dada* and *Mohitda*, was striking. How often did we listen with extreme delight, to their talks to us, about the *mamas*. When they started on the subject, it was difficult for them to stop and they were heard on with rapt attention.

I started collecting materials for Mohitmama's life and then I remembered an old file of my father. On going through the papers left behind by him after he had passed away, a roll of papers was found amongst other things in the drawer of his table. On opening it, I discovered a treasure of a manuscript written by my father in infirm and shaky hand, densely crowded with plenty of additions and alterations.

This contained bright sketches of the beautiful lives of my three uncles—Pramathalal Sen, Benoyendra Nath Sen and Mohit Chandra Sen. Evidently it was the rough copy of literature, to be published by my father, either in a book form or as a series of articles in some journal. My father had published twelve inspired articles on his reminiscences of the lives of the missionaries of his Mandali, who had greatly influenced his life. Probably the manuscript was a supplement to this series.

As matter stood, it was difficult for one to make much use of the manuscript as it was. But besides the life histories, there were facts and expressions, that threw flood-light upon the religious history of Bengal in those days and as such, they need be preserved for future generations. The manuscript was typed with great care and effort, but in spite of it, there were some blanks in the copy.

However, this typed manuscript was helpful. There were many beautiful notes, sketches, snapshots, thought-expressions from my father and additional biographical accounts about my three uncles. All these had to be collated from different places in the manuscript with great care and scrutiny, so that they might be presented in a book form to the discerning eyes.

For convenience of treatment, the manuscript could be taken to consist essentially of two parts. Firstly, accounts of the lives were found inter-twined, with a comparative study of their characters, showing remarkable similarities and also some distinctive individual traits. Secondly, there were the descriptive side of their life-stories, treated separately with various striking biographic features of each, prominence having been given to their special characteristics. The gaps left by the typist had to be filled up and missing links supplemented by gleanings from literatures already published.

In the matter of getting the manuscript ready for the press, I had the help from three of my father's dear ones, who have the highest regards for him and for the three great lives sketched in the book. One, from whom by far the largest amount of help came, belongs to the age pictured in the book. He is over ninety—our only friend left now, who knew father intimately almost all his life, from his early school days. He insists on remaining anonymous. His feeling must be respected.

I was helped by my friend Bejoy Kumar Sarkar and my young nephews Jayabrata and Debabrata, in revising my corrections of the proofs, very faithfully. My blessings to them for their efforts.

There was no date on the manuscript. Presumably it belonged to some time between 1945-48. The context of the present tense in the book should refer to this period. It is a matter of deep regret that the book could not be published by my father himself, but he was fast losing his eye-sight then and was too infirm for any serious work, not to speak of undergoing the strain of getting the manuscript through the Press.

There are two Biographies of my *Baramama*. *Naloo-mama* wished very much to see *Mohit-mama's* life-sketch published. He expressed this wish to Khetra Mohon Sen of the Prayer Meeting Band and wrote— “মোহিতের লেখা যে চিঠিগুলি পাঠিয়েছেন,—আজ একটি একটি করে দেখতে লাগলাম। রত্নগুলি যত্ন করে রেখেছেন,—এইবার আপনার কাজ নতুন করে মোহিতের কথা লিখুন.....”। At long last, the book is now ready and in this, *Naloo-mama's* wish is fulfilled.

Before I conclude, I only crave indulgence for all shortcomings appearing in the book. It would have been so nice and helpful had the book come out in my father's life time! The Sale-proceeds will be used for memorials to the three saintly lives.

1. 8. 63.

“One of the saddest things at the present time in Bengal (I speak as a true friend) is the lack of permanent records of its great and noble lives. The age has been a really great one in Bengal, and historians in the future will look back with regret, if they find no sources to refer to, whereby to distinguish its greatness.—Rev. C. F. Andrews: ‘In Memoriam’ to Benoyendranath. (1913)

—স্মৃতি-তীর্থ—

এখন চক্ষু প্রায় দৃষ্টিহীন, হস্ত আর স্থিরভাবে চলে না। মায়ের নামগান করিতে করিতে সংসার হইতে অতি উর্ধ্বে উঠিতে পারি যেন। সকলের নিকট ‘প্রার্থনা’র অশ্রুজল ভিক্ষা করি; ‘প্রার্থনা’র ভিতর দিয়াই এখন আমার সকলের সহিত নিত্য সম্পর্ক। এ যোগ ছিল হইবার নহে। দুঃখের কোনও আঘাত নিত্যকে বিচলিত করিতে পারিবে না। পরমা জননীর উজ্জ্বল মুখ সম্মুখে প্রকাশিত। হৃদয়ে তাঁহার অমৃতপরশ আমাকে অমরত্বের পথে লইয়া চলিয়াছে। জয় মা আনন্দময়ীর জয়! —বেণীমাধব : ‘জীবনের পরিচয়’।

জীবনে বলের প্রস্রবণ পরমাত্মাকে লাভ,—তাঁহার বরণে। বরণ—আত্মদান; বর—এই পরমাত্মার আত্ম-স্বজনময়ী শক্তি। সর্ব্বাভীত বিনি, সেই পরমাত্মা হৃদিস্থিত হইয়া, মানবাত্মাকে ‘প্রার্থনা’রূপ উর্ধ্বমুখী গতিশীলতা প্রদান করেন। হৃদয়ের মধ্যে তাঁহার নিত্য-স্থিতি, নিত্য-গতি ও অমৃতজীবনের পূর্ণতা—মানবজ্ঞানে আত্মপ্রকাশ, মানবচরিত্রে আত্মপ্রতিষ্ঠা। এই ‘প্রার্থনা’য় জীবনের চির-নবীনতা ও ভক্তির অনন্তস্ফুরণ; কৰ্ম্মশীলতা, কৰ্ত্তব্যনিষ্ঠা এবং শিল্প-সাহিত্যসৃষ্টি, পরিবার-গঠন, সমাজ-প্রতিষ্ঠা। মানব-সেবা প্রভৃতির উদ্ভব—নিত্য-পূর্ণতার পথে অনন্ত আনন্দময় তীর্থযাত্রা।

—বেণীমাধব : ‘ব্রাহ্ম যুব-সমিতির মানপত্রের প্রতিভাষণ’।

The Pilgrimage through Prayer frees the soul from all bondage by leading it to the fountain-head in the heart of prayer. The soul then grows in the Transcendent. It opens out the way to fuller life in all the Dispensations of Providence. God within finds God without, as God without finds Himself within.

This life of fulness, is its perpetual pilgrimage from height to nobler heights diving deeper and deeper into the unfathomable depths of Being,—and at the same time expanding to have all in its loving embrace. This is the pilgrimage of life!—Benimadhab : ‘Gleanings’.

Prayer Meeting Pilgrims : ‘The Trio

Prayer Meeting Pilgrims : The 'Trio'

**Prayer
Meeting :
Its Incep-
tion, 1879**

The spirit of prayer was imbued in the minds of the young men of the Nababidhan Brahmo Samaj, in the late Nineteenth Century, by the inspiring life and teachings of Brahmananda Keshab Chandra Sen and his associates. This gradually became all-pervading in some of these lives and they formed themselves into a 'Young Men's Prayer Meeting' Band. Upashana (উপাসনা) with fervent prayer as its pivot, formed an integral part of their daily routine. The idea may be said to have originated with Benoyendra Nath Sen of a devout Brahmo family, in 1879, when he was barely eleven, and some of his intimate class-mates. The young boys would gather together after school hours and in course of their evening walks, would select a quiet corner at Narkeldanga, Goldighi or Hedua park and sit down to prayer. And their 'Prayer Meetings' from this nebulous state gradually took up a definite shape.

Keshabchandra started his 'Band of Hope' for boys, in 1876. Through the intimate contact with the great charming personality the Band was caught by his spirit of prayer, which was always Keshabchandra's main source of inspiration for his spiritual growth of life. The Band had heard with deep interest from the elders, how the dawn of his beautiful spiritual life synchronise with the establishment of his 'Goodwill Fraternity' * twenty years before (1857),—prayer being its key-note. But this prayer was Keshabchandra's best friend from even a much earlier date. The idea of

* Pratap Chandra's dreamy reverent recollection of the first devotional meeting — "One evening we, five or six most dear friends met at a room in Keshab's house. We closed the doors, and in the dim oil-light each one poured forth his innermost thought in sincere prayer. A name-less solemnity filled every heart. The Eternal Spirit of God, for the first time seemed a hallowed presence. Keshab prayed and we all wept He was ignited with an ascetic glow."

Binoyendranath's 'Prayer Meeting' and his subsequent 'Fraternal Home' thus took root in his mind, from his early age. As they grew a little older, the Prayer Meeting Band would go to the *Mandir* on every Sunday along with their friends, with a spirit of reverence, to fill up their minds with the treasures of rapturous hymns and soul-stirring *Upashana* with prayers welling out from the depth of Keshabchandra's heart.

**Character
Built
through
Prayer**

The beauty of Keshabchandra's spiritual life was before the eyes of these young Band and they were taught that their aim of life was to build up their characters through utter self-abnegation and prayer. Keshabchandra's idea of Harmony became the ideal of their lives and the prophets and the saints preached and expressed themselves to them through his life and inspired sermons.

Although the Band was in their 'teens' when Keshabchandra left his mortal frame, the vivid impression of the great man was working up their youthful minds. Their deep feeling is represented well by the boy Benoyendranath in their Prayer Meeting, when he said—

"It was once our dream, when our little souls were just opening up at the touch of his spirit, that the tide of time would gently lead us on till our lives were sanctified to the service of God, under the inspiring light of those kindling eyes, when we would be assembled before the throne of God, round the elders of our *Mandali*, with him in the centre, grown even more beautiful with the snow of age upon the head. But he has been called away before our souls could open up to him."

**Mystic
Sakina**

"In vain do we look about us for that clear voice of inspiration, that spirit of harmony of life, that steady enthusiasm for prayerful work, which like the mystic *Shakinah* made us feel the reality of the presence of God in the midst of all saints,—the beauty of this heaven to dwell in"

Nobody ever heard Benoyendranath uttering Keshabchandra's name. Keshab was always a 'he' to Benoyendranath. What a silent, mystic, faithful love!

Keshabchandra's life re-created and re-organised itself in the lives of the Prayer Meeting Band. Benoyendranath used to tell us that Keshabchandra on the pulpit, had a heavenly glow around his face, which so rivetted his soul that he could hardly turn his eyes away from Keshabchandra's face or close them. The great prayerful soul naturally produced a deep impression on their youthful minds. Their spiritual lives gradually gained in maturity, through prayer. And later prayer became their all-in-all. Benoyendranath may be regarded as the worthy representative of the prayerful Band. His life of prayer, deeply impressed even a foreigner — Rev. Dr. J. T. Sunderland, the representative of the Unitarian Churches, with whom Benoyendranath was a guest during his Western Pilgrimage. Years afterwards Rev. Sunderland bore ample testimony to it in his 'In Memoriam', with his feeling remark—"While with Benoyendranath, nothing seemed so natural, so inevitable, or so beautiful—as prayer."

**Keshab on
the Pulpit :
a heavenly
Glow**

Keshabchandra was an apostle of Prayer, Faith and Harmony. His life was prayer, prayer was the very breath that sustained his life. His sayings and writings, all through his life, were full of beautiful expositions of his firm faith in prayer. Only a few beautiful extracts given below would point out as to what served as the perennial source of inspiration to the Prayer Meeting Band, to light up their paths of 'Pilgrimage through Prayer'—

**Prayer and
Keshab**

"Prayer is a hungering and thirsting of the soul. As I ask for food that is essential for the body, so I pray to God for His grace and blessings, which are essential for my soul. A deep want, a pressing irresistible necessity is the origin of prayer. For your prayers to be answered, they must be sincere. When the heart prays, all thoughts must be attuned to the harmony of communion with God. Posture is not prayer, mere words are not your real wishes."

"Prayers and Inspiration are the two ends of the axis, around which the sphere of man's spiritual life revolves. Man prays and God hears ; God speaks and man listens and

obeys. Thus a sort of union is established and kept up between the created and the Great Creator. True prayer is not its language. It represents a peculiar attitude of the soul ; —a God-ward attitude, a heaven-ward attitude, an attitude of reverent humility and self-consecration. It is an attitude, of child-like trust and meekness,—an attitude indicative of a deep consciousness of weakness and a strong feeling of necessity of Divine aid. Such an attitude of the soul is prayer ! This attitude will enable us to receive the light and wind of Heaven and fill our hearts with showers of eternal bliss. This is the whole philosophy of prayer.”

“Make prayer the highest concern in your lives. Trust not yourselves, but trust God, Pray sincerely, earnestly and ceaselessly. Pray alone, pray together—with your family, with your people. Pray in solitude, pray amidst the activities of daily life. Subordinate your worldly interests and pursuits to prayer. Let prayer be the Alpha and the Omega of your life. May India be the land of fervent prayer and joyful communion.”

**Regenerated
India**

“Never shall India be regenerated without prayer. Therefore, I would say to you all—men and women,—pray and pray. Set aside your worldly concerns for a few minutes at least every day. Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsees—members of all creeds and nationalities,—all unite to pray.”

The last extract was Keshabchandra’s diagnosis of India’s ailment through his prophetic vision and his feeling exhortation to the nation to take recourse to prayer as its panacea. These writings and sayings of Keshabchandra and above all, his charming personality as their background, served as the beacon light to the Prayer Meeting Band and created a moral, cultural and spiritual atmosphere around them, through the cultivation of the spirit of prayer. The young men that came in contact with the Band could feel its elevating influence in properly moulding their characters and building up healthy pure lives.

Ah ! if this baneful influence of prayer could be sustained, India to-day would not have been in such a sad plight in the midst of misery and untruth. By continuing the cultivation of Keshabchandra's life of prayer, India could be in a better position to preach the doctrine of Truth,—its great heritage of spiritual life, of which the Humanity is in dire need in this grossly materialistic age.

In Keshabchandra's memorable book 'Jiban Veda' (Life—the Scripture), containing a series of sixteen discourses delineating Heaven's graces that secretly worked to unfold the beauties of his spiritual life, delivered from the Mandir in 1882, he dedicates the very first chapter to 'Prayer', which had been ever the first thing in life for him

**Keshab's
Jeevan
Veda :
Prayer,—the
First
Chapter**

A brief synopsis of this chapter of the book reveal beautifully what prayer meant to Keshabchandra and how the power of prayer overwhelmed him all the time—

"From the early dawn of my spiritual life, I had none to guide me, no book to give me light. I did not know what the right religion was ; I did not know what the true church meant. There was yet a voice in the innermost recesses of my heart that said—'Pray, pray ceaselessly ; there is no other way'. Why, and for what I prayed, I knew not,—but like the first glimmering of light after a maddening darkness, this filled my life with hope. I obeyed the voice and started praying. My language was poor and fell far short of giving expressions to my feelings."

"I started to offer prayer in writing, every morning and evening. Gradually, I grew in wisdom and I could mutter a few words of prayer. Even this gave me abundant strength of mind. Prayer became my shield and buckle,—my unfailing guide. I used nothing else for my spiritual growth."

"When twenty, I joined the Brahmo Samaj and became an ardent follower of the faith. Later I was blessed to be ordained its *acharya* and even gained strength enough to preach. To prayer I owed everything. Prayer was my sheet-anchor. I did not drift and thus now I am what I am. I am

**Prayer :
the Unfail-
ing friend**

in greater debt to prayer than to any one of my friends, for there was a time when I had nothing else to fall back on."

"I knew whoever prayed had an answer. Deception in prayer is detestable and must be avoided. He who prays but does not wait patiently for an answer, practises fraud. He, whose exterior and interior are dissimilar, is a deceiver and his prayer is mockery. He, who speaks only, is a cheat. He, who has not the requisite calmness in his mind while praying, has a double face. True prayer is a most difficult thing. He, who prays for worldly gains, even if it be for half a pice, is a deceiver. Keep your prayers pure, free from all desires for earthly gain. Pray for spiritual things alone and every thing else shall be added unto it."

Rishi Pratap Chandra Mozoomdar was the life-long friend of Keshabchandra. He beautifully describes the latter's life of prayer, in the following lines in his book—"The Life and Teachings of Keshab Chandra Sen", published in 1886 :—

"Keshabchandra had a wonderful faith in prayer. An intense perseverance in prayerfulness characterised him at all times. With him it was an instinct. He had never reasoned about it, never had he any doubt about its efficiency : he always clung to prayer with a simple child-like tenacity. He was exceedingly realistic in his prayer. He seldom cared to indulge in artfulness or imagination, but prayed outright for every spiritual need that cropped up. He discovered in prayer, the inevitable and essential law of spiritual progress. He never believed that the nature of God could ever be changed by our prayer. The Divine Will is immutable. But he held that the law of grace and spiritual growth are intertwined and as such, demanded faithful observance of prayer on our part. Prayer from the heart changes a man's mental make-up. He gains new vision, new insight, a fresh flow of heart and intense force of will. To Keshabchandra, prayer was the only unfailing vehicle of perennial light and guidance. They are the artless expression of a man who empties his whole being into the bosom of a felt

Infinite Reality, resulting in a direct and immediate intercourse with the Divine Spirit."

"A perfect master of his mother tongue, Keshabchandra poured forth his aspirations in a rippling stream of pellucid poetry, to which it was a delight to listen. Now and again, he descended to the homeliest, simplest, most familiar vernacular, but anon he ascended to flights of expression and sentiment, which nothing in the religious literature of any country could excel. They are a mighty memorial to a spiritual genius."

It was ordained by Providence that after about half a century, another great son of India—Mahatma Gandhi was to preach anew the Gospel of Prayer, through which and which alone, the spirit of Truth and Non-violence can develop to present true independence to India. The Soul-force that is cultivated through prayer can only save humanity from the distrust and bitter feeling between the nations and bring peace to the world. Gandhiji's daily Prayer Meetings and his post-prayer sermons to the large gatherings of all religions and nationalities, played a vital role in welding our people together. But alas ! do we still remember Gandhiji or for the matter of that, Keshabchandra, who was his predecessor* in the path of prayer,—the hero of the Pilgrims of the Prayer Meeting ?

Gradually the Prayer Meeting took up an organised form and then it used to have its sittings in a room of the Albert School and after that in the house of Sree Kanailal Pyne. Rishi Pratapchandra, Upadhya Gourgovinda, Chiranjib Trailokyanath, Rector Krishnabehari and other elders of the *Mandali* used to come to the Prayer Meetings, to inspire the Band. These could be arranged with the help of Sree Nagen-dra Nath Mitra and Barada Prasad Ghose, to whom Benoyen-dranath was very dear. At its first anniversary *Utsab*, Chiranjeeb Trailokya Nath Sanyal was the *Achariya*. After

**Gandhiji
Glorifies
Prayer
Anew :
Seventy
Years after**

A Legacy

**Prayer
Meeting
Grows,**

* "Before Gandhiji was born, Keshab preached about prayer at Bombay and Madras—alone and unfriended. Ranade felt the electric shock of the words. He came to Calcutta and saw Keshab. Ranade was the *Guru* of Gokhale and Gokhale was Gandhi's *Guru*."—*Pramathalal*.

shifting from place to place, the Prayer Meeting at last in 1883, found more or less a permanent abode in Benoyendranath's residence at Shankaritola.

Every saturday evening, Benoyendranath and his friends would gather in his room on the ground-floor and Benoyendranath was at once the minister as well as the servant to scrub the floor, clean up the room, spread the mat, light up the lamp,—even collect some flowers and to get everything ready for the gathering. Usually it was he who would conduct Upashana, give readings and lead discussions on religious subjects, for the uplift of the minds. His friend Suresh Chandra Bose (afterwards Headmaster of the Bowbazar School and on retirement, a homeopathic practitioner at Lucknow), would usually lead the soul-enthraling hymns. The happy reminiscences of those Prayer Meeting days have been beautifully depicted in the journal, 'Dharmatattwa' (April 1913) by Benoyendranath's second sister Sm. Sarala Debi, in her own simple feeling way—

**Sarala Debi's
Sweet
Remem-
brances**

1884

“দাদা কলেজে ঢুকিবার পরই তাঁদের প্রিয় ‘প্রেরার মিটিং’ উঠিয়া আসে আমাদের কাঁসারী পাড়ার বাড়ীর নীচের তলার ছোট একখানি ঘরে। প্রতি শনিবার উপাসনা হইত। কলেজ হইতে ফিরিয়া, জামা কাপড় ছাড়িয়া, ঝাঁটা দিয়া, দাদা নিজ হাতে ঘর খানি আগাগোড়া ঝাড়িয়া পরিষ্কার করিতেন। অন্য কাহারও করা পছন্দ করিতেন না—আমাদের বারণ করিয়া দিয়া-ছিলেন। তাহার পর নিজের হাতে চিমনি পরিষ্কার করিয়া, পলিতা কাটিয়া, কেরোসিন তেল ঢালিয়া ঘরের আলোর সুব্যবস্থা করিতেন। উপাসনা স্থলে আসন পাতিয়া যথাস্থানে গানের বই, একতারা, করতাল সুন্দর ভাবে গুছাইয়া রাখিতেন। সকল কাজই কেমন পবিত্র নিষ্ঠার সহিত সম্পন্ন করিতেন—আমরা মুগ্ধ চোখে তাকাইয়া থাকিতাম। দাদাই উপাসনা করিতেন, বন্ধুরা গান করিতেন। কি সুন্দর যে হইত! সেইজন্য শনিবার সন্ধ্যাটি আমাদের কাছে বড়ই প্রিয় ছিল। সেই সময় অন্য কোথাও যাইবার থাকিলে আমাদের বড়ই দুঃখ হইত, মনে বড় অশান্তি হইত। আহা! সেই সুখের দিন আর আসিবে না মনে হইলে বড় কল্লা আসে।”

In 1885, Pramatha Lal Sen and Mohit Chandra Sen, cousins of Benoyendranath joined him in the path of 'Pilgrimage Through Prayer' and then the Prayer Meeting definitely gained in devotional strength. The coming together of these three great souls was ordained by Providence, and this raised high hopes for the Mandali in the minds of its well-wishers. It indeed augured a bright future for the Brahmo Samaj, when this 'Trio' formed a happy union of prayerful spirits, which gradually blossomed with a divine fragrance and beauty about it, with maturity of their spiritual uplift. This was finally transformed into deep communion of loving souls and dear companionship, through the divine bond of Prayer.

**Pramathalal
& Mohitchandra joins :
1885**

The biographer of Benoyendranath has revealed to us a lovely picture of how Pramathalal used to come to Benoyendranath often, and how they would be found sitting together without exchange of any word between them — only glistening tears in the eyes of both indicated how one felt the presence of the other. Benoyendranath regarded Pramathalal as — "A love which has taken up a human form, which follows me even when wandering far away from my spiritual fountain-head".

**Silent Love
that Ever
Follows**

Mohitchandra would also come to Benoyendranath, but he did not sit silent. He would talk and talk vigorously on various subjects — Philosophy, Theology and Sociology too ; sometimes the exhilarating talks would culminate in the child philosopher Mohitchandra's excited shouts, which would draw even the ladies of the house to peep through the door, to make sure that no actual scuffle was going on between the two. On occasions, one could enjoy the sight of a roaring Mohitchandra thumping about in the room like a majestic lion,—Benoyendranath sitting calmly on the chair. The meetings would end happily in a bright peel of laughter from Mohitchandra and sweet smiles beamed out from Benoyendranath's face.

**The Robust
Love**

Benoyendranath was enthralled with the child-like simplicity and inherent sincerity of Mohitchandra's prayers, and about his loving regard for Pramathalal's prayers, Benoyendranath thus records in his own Diary — "N's (Naloo's)

Their Prayers : Simplicity & Depth

Upashana at the Peace Cottage to-night, came to me with the sweetest charm. There was nothing particularly new about the idea or the wordings, but it was the freshness of the spirit gently breaking out like the dawn, into clearer and brighter glow through that silvery succession of words. The *Upashana* was rather long, but it was one sustained act of concentration, through which were filled equally the soul of the speaker and the listener, without leaving any room for wandering and listlessness. What impressed me most is the unspeakable depth of feeling that lies hidden at the bottom of the soul, while the expression is severely chaste and filled with sweetness and pathos that are the outcome of the most spontaneous and unconcious self-restraint. I have no word sufficient to characterise this language,—it is the language of the highest poetry. From it, I could realise, what Ruskin says, is the characteristic of the first order of poets.”

What a deep sublime love grew up between the ‘Trio’ ! We also find from the Diary, how on the 25th of September,—Benoyendranath’s birthday, he was anxiously awaiting the arrival of his dear friends’ much-expected letters of birthday-greetings,—and how over-joyed he was when the letters did reach him !

Pramathalal went to Oxford with the Manchester Scholarship and had to stay there for more than two years for his studies. How restless Benoyendranath felt as the day of his return came nearer,—anxious to meet the idol of his love after the pang of long separation. And when Benoyendranath passed away, Pramathalal came and squatted on the floor of the verandah outside Benoyendranath’s room, and prayed and prayed—tightening the tie of prayer, binding him with the departed soul in its eternal pilgrimage.

Since the date of the happy union between the three cousins — fondly called the ‘Inseperable Trio’, they became the nucleus for the growth of the Prayer Meeting Band in their pilgrimage. Through prayer, the nature of the ‘Trio’ was surprisingly cognate, similar,—yet different in different manifestations of the Heavenly Father, in their lives. Their’s were the lives of ‘Plain Living and High Thinking’, marked

**Nallo, Benoy,
Mohit : the
Inseperable
‘Trio’**

by simplicity, purity, and austerity of character,—completely detached from worldly gains or pleasures.

All the three were finely built, of fair complexion, fine features, of simple bearing—though scrupulously chaste and clean. They were highly intellectual, with lofty ideals. •The ‘Trio’ had a harmonious blending of sweet notes in their musical soul with deep feeling and with the spirit of universality stamped on them. Their beautiful hand-writings (one easily to be mistaken for the other), the manner of their dress,—even the way of arranging their hairs, were conspicuously of the Keshab *anukrity*. And no wonder—for Pramatahalal was Keshabchandra’s nephew, Benoyendranath and Mohitchandra were also nephews—a little distantly related. •The saying goes that nephews usually grow after uncles.

**Surprisingly
Similar :
Beautifully
Distinctive**

Pramathalal, sweet in temperament, loving in nature, sublime in thought, and steeped in the ideals and spirit of Keshabchandra and his Nababidhan, was a born missionary of the Brahmo Samaj. His celebrate life had a ‘monastic touch with the whole world as his monastery’. With a magic charm, innate in his self, he could attract and gather round him all lovers of the *mandali*, and infuse enthusiasm in them to work for it. He was a man of superb silence, — except when on the pulpit, but the magnet in him would be working all the time.

**Sweet
Pramathala**

Benoyendranath had specially a balanced and clear mind. There was an ‘equanimity and a poise’ in the make-up of his mind, with a meditative mood and a calm reserve. Even amongst some of the young associates of the Band, he was often looked upon with reverential awe, But the reserve was not cold; it was softend with love. Once you get near Benoyendranath, he is yours very own. The apparent coldness of temperament may be attributable to shyness, based on an apprehension lest he be not properly understood.

**Benoyendra-
nath’s Subli-
me Poise**

About this mood in character, Rabindranath felt a strange similarity with Benoyendranath and wrote to him—

প্রিয়বরেষু, আপনার চিঠি পড়ে মনে হলো, একটা বিষয় আপনার সঙ্গে
মিলছে।আপনি যে আশঙ্কা প্রকাশ করেছেন

নিজের সম্বন্ধে, আমারও সেই আশঙ্কা। আমার ভয় হয়, কাছে এলে পাছে আমার পরিচয় না পান—পাছে আমাকে সুদূরবর্তী বলে মনে করেন। বিশেষ কিছু আশা না করে, কল্পনা না করে, ব্যস্ত করবার চেষ্টা না করে কেবলমাত্র সঙ্গ দেওয়া এবং নেওয়া,—এ একটা ক্ষমতা।
আপনি আমাকে ভয় করবেন না, আমি আপনার কাছে কিছুমাত্র দাবী করব না—আপনি নিতান্ত চুপ করে থাকলেও আমি আপনার কথা শুনতে পাব—আপনি নিশ্চেষ্ট থাকলেও আমি আপনাকে গ্রহণ করতে পারব। আমাদের পরস্পরে দেখাশুনার অবকাশ, বোধহয়, বেশি না হতে পারে—কিন্তু আপনি আর আমার অগোচরে থাকতে পারবেন না। মেহিত বাবুকেও আমি অল্পদিন মাত্র দেখেছি।
কিন্তু আমার চিত্ত তাঁকে চিহ্নিত করে নিয়েছে—এখন আমি নিশ্চিত। জানিনে, তিনি কিরকম করে আপনাদের পংক্তির মধ্যে বসিয়ে নিয়েছেন—এখন আমি আপনাদের।অতএব আপনি এক কাজ করবেন, আমকে আপনাদের পুরাতনের মধ্যে গণ্য করে নেবেন, নুতন কিছুই প্রত্যাশা করবেন না। যদি আমাকে হাৎড়ে বেড়ান, তবেই আমার ভয় হবে,—কি জানি আপনার হাতে কি ঠেকাবে। কিন্তু যদি আমাকে নিতান্তই সহজ ভাবে গ্রহণ করেন, তবেই আপনাদের প্রীতিতে আমি নিজেকে পরিপূর্ণতর জ্ঞান করব। ইতি—

1962

২৮শে ফাল্গুন, ১৩০৮

আপনার

শ্রীরবীন্দ্র নাথ ঠাকুর।

Mohitchandra : an Exhilarating Genie

Mohitchandra was highly emotional and impulsive in nature, brilliant and exhilarating in his talks and was thus a very entertaining and elevating friend and philosopher. His genius had its inevitable inherent eccentricities.

The friend of the 'Trio', Lalita Mohan Roy, Suresh Chandra Bose, Devendra Nath Bose, Surendranath Dutta, Kalinath Ghose, Khetra Mohan Sen, Jnanendra Mohan Sen, Jogendra Chandra Laha, Lalit Mohan Chatterjee, Purnanda Chatterjee and others, were earnest members of the Prayer

Meeting. A younger group, — Debendra Nath Sen (Patna), Prasanta Kumar Sen, Satyendra Nath Sen, Monmohan Chatterjee, Bidhu Bhusan Bose, Benode Behary Majumdar, Pramatha Nath Chatterjee, Rajendra Nath Sen, Banku Behari Chowdhury, Haridas Chatterjee, Hemanta Kumar Chatterjee, Dayal Ghandra Ghose, Monmotha Dhone Dey, Monoratha Dhone Dey, Satyendra Nath Mukherjee, Benoy Bhusan Sarkar, Amritananda Roy, Debendra Nath Sen, Benoy Bhusan Sehanobis, Paresh Ranjan Roy, Jagamohon Das, Sarat Kumer Dutta, Probodh Kumar Datta and others, used to flock round the elders Bidhan Chandra Roy, Karuna Kumar Chatterjee, Jyoti Lal Sen, all eminent medical men, in their after-life, came for their study to Calcutta and were also attracted to the Band. And so were also Umaprasanna Ghose and Sidherwar Sarkar.

The Band

Although a mere sojourner then, in Calcutta, this humble 'relative-friend' of Benoyendranath, whenever blessed with the privilege of being in their company, would breathe deep in the bracing atmosphere of devotion, have a refreshing bath in the depth of the holy communion and partake heartily of the spiritual repast. Pramathalal, Benoyendranath, and Mohitchandra were usually the ministers and Kalinath in charge of singing hymns.

**A Sojourner's
Refreshing
Bath : The
Hearty
Repast**

Some of the Pilgrims of the Prayer Meeting Band were marked by some distinctive features in their temperaments. For their characteristic traits, they were fondly awarded special names by their admiring friends. Pramathalal, Benoyendranath and Mohitchandra were the 'Inseparable Trio' and on the lips of their friends one of these names would always revive the other two. Besides, Mohitchandra was sometimes addressed as 'Prof. Teufelsdröckh' from the character of 'Philosopher of Clothes' in Carlyle's 'Sartor Resartus'. Kalinath was '*Sangit Lahari*', a rippling stream of music, always found ready with his musical soul to give expression through songs, is to the spirit of the deep aradhana, fervent prayers and inspiring sermons in the Prayer Meetings. Lalitamohan, the oldest among the Pilgrims, was the connecting link with the elders of the *Mandali*. He was all

**their
Nicknames**

smiles, gentle and sweet in nature and a man of few words'—but these few were always words of wisdom. Sometimes he would be called upon to pilot the Prayer Meetings. In any case, almost on every occasion he would come out with a prayer, straight from his heart, in his own simple way. He was named 'The Silent Pastor' after the title of Rishi Pratapchandra's book, embodying his thoughts and reflections on matters,—moral, theological and spiritual.

The days of the Prayer Meetings were looked upon by the Band as the sweetest time in their lives and were indeed a bright chapter in the history of the *Mandali*. Whenever a member met another during the closing chapter of their lives, they used to bask in the after-glow of those happy days and conjure up pleasant memories. The Prayer Meeting Pilgrims were a Band of inspired souls, united in a sprit of harmony through prayer, in an atmosphere where there were no petty personal squabbles, no sectarian bickerings. The hearts strung in unison, through united prayers, marched together in their 'Pilgrimage,'—from freedom to freedom, from perfection to perfection, from truth to the eternal Truth

The growth in size of the Prayer Meeting Band went pari-passu with the growth in their spirit. The venue shifted from the small room in Benoyendranath's residence to his 'Fraternal Home' at 92, Harrison Road, and after that to the 'Peace Cottage' at 84, Upper Circular Road, and finally to an ante-room of the Bharatvarshiya Brahmo Mandir at 95, Mechuabazar Street, (now Keshab Chandra Sen Street).

The 'Trio' were the beloved of the Apostles and Missionaries of the Nababidhan Brahmo Samaj and were counted upon with high hopes as its future Torch-Bearers. They were however, particular pets of one great soul,—Rishi Pratap Chandra Mozumder, who regarded them as his '*Manash Putras*',—children of the spirit.

Pratapchandra was known to the *Mandali* as 'Apostle of Conscience and Culture'. Faith is behind Conscience and Prayer is its support and expression in life. Out of Prayer shines forth Truth in all its glory. Conscience is the Absolute with its seat in the heart, the controlling and commanding

Sweet Memories : the After-Glow

Pilgrims & their Pilgrimages.

Pratapchandra's '*Manash —putras*'

power, which blesses with a heavenly light when obeyed and results when slighted, in a life degenerate, bringing man down to the level of the animal. Conscience is the descent of God with His voice to our soul.

Pratapchandra always showed a keen interest in the intellectual and moral welfare of the young. He loved youth and the young ones loved him. In his 'Heart Beats', he wonders why they are drawn to him. He also finds the answer in his heart—"Because there is perpetual youth and freshness in my soul, a tenderness and womanliness, which age hates and youth loves".

Pratap Loves Youth

It was through his unstinted efforts that the 'Society for the Higher Training of Young Men' (a name subsequently changed to the more common-place one—'The Calcutta University Institute'), was started in 1891, with the support of some of the eminent men of the time Sir Gurudas Banerjee, the first Indian Vice-Chancellor of the University, was its General President, the great Bankimchandra Chatterjee, Dr. Mahendra Lal Sarkar, Dr. P. K. Roy were the Sectional Presidents and Dr. Wilson was the Secretary.

The University Institute 1891

The Prayer Meeting Band grew up in this moral and cultural atmosphere. Rishi Pratapchandra used to come often to them to bless and guide them in their spiritual uplift. "The real meaning of Religion is Morality"—said Keshabchandra. Pratapchandra also strongly felt a close relationship between the two. To him — "To see God was Religion, to hear God was Morality. The communion with God is Religion, the obedience to God is Morality".

Moral Atmosphere

His writings in 'The Interpreter' (subsequently 'The Young Men and the Interpreter'), which Pratapchandra edited from 1885 to 1904, used to inspire them along their path of Pilgrimage through Prayer.

Interpreter Inspires Pilgrims

Pratapchandra was a great personality and Rabindranath also was attracted by him and the Poet used to come to his house—the 'Peace Cottage'. The Poet was then young 'Rabi Babu' and not yet a world-figure, but was still a great power in the country. One remembers with pleasure, the afternoon when some of the Prayer Meeting Band were gathered round

The Rishi & the Poet

Rishi Pratapchandra, listening with rapt attention to his slow mellow voice pouring out his deep spiritual thoughts in poetic language, all his own. Suddenly there was a gentle stir amongst us, — “Ah ! Rabi Babu is coming, Rabi Babu is here”.

The beauty of the Poet flashed in a striking noble appearance and all eyes were directed towards him. It was indeed a sight for us to find our ‘Rabi Babu’ respectfully bowing down to the venerable Rishi. They sat together and all felt exhilarated by the conversation between the two great souls.

Shantiniketan
Pous-utsav

The great regard which the Poet had for the Rishi can well be realised from the fact that on the occasion of the first Anniversary of Santiniketan Mandir on the 7th Pous, 1893, Pratapchandra conducted the *Upashana**. Round about the Rishi, a tie sprang up between the Poet and the Prayer Meeting ‘Trio’, which gradually grew stronger in time.

There was also a close attachment between the Poet and the singing-apostle of the Nababidhan, Chiranjib Trailokya Nath Sanyal, and they are found in a photo, sitting side by side. Chiranjib used to sing kirtans during the *Pous Utsavs*.**

It may be recounted with pleasure and pardonable pride, that it was one of the ‘Trio’ of the Prayer Meeting — Sadhu Pramathalal — who on his third pilgrimage to England, lent a hand to enable the West to discover the Poet.

Upadhya's
Rose, Jasmine
& Lily

Upadhya Gour Govinda Roy used to say that whenever Benoyendranath entered his room, he was reminded of a beautiful Rose. If Benoyendranath could be compared with a Rose bathed in dew, smiling in the streams of the morning light with the splendour of purity and brightness of intellect, Mohitchandra was like a bunch of Jasmine, with sweet tenderness and keen vision of child-like simplicity and intelligent mind. Pramathalal was like a Lily of sanctity.

*উৎসবে প্রাতে ভাই প্রতাপচন্দ্র একাকী উপাসনা করেন এবং সন্ধ্যাকালে পূজণীয় দ্বিজেন্দ্র নাথ ঠাকুর প্রভৃতি করেন—জ্ঞানেন্দ্র নাথ চট্টোপাধ্যায় : “শান্তি-নিকেতন আশ্রম”।

**ত্রৈলোক্য নাথ সান্তাল মহাশয় উৎসবে কীর্তন করিতেন। ব্রহ্মানন্দ কেশবচন্দ্রের পুত্র করুণাকুমার একবার খোল বাজাইয়া ছিলেন। এ

Benoyendranath was like the huge Niagra, shining and resplendent both in bright sunshine and the romantic mellowed moonlight and then, vigorously rolling down, glistening between two pure white marble rocks. His life-movements flowed within the bounds of solid character,—free in its absoluteness but conditioned by the commands of conscience.

Mohitchandra was like the Gangotri, with the sweet melodies in its impulsive leaps from valley to valley,—now through a dense forest, with the clear notes of birds coming out of cloud-land and flapping back into the dark distant unknown, from where still float mysterious notes ; now wriggling through the bends of craggy rocks; now passing through the green verdure in the clear shining blue. Thus his poetic temperamental mind reflects the kaleidoscopic scenery of Nature.

**The Niagra,
Gangotri &
Bindu-
Sarobos**

If Benoyendranath was the torrential flow and Mohitchandra a rippling stream, Pramathalal was a serene and calm fountain,—a '*Bindu-sarobar*', a reservoir before a temple,—full to the brim with the sacred water from the Ganges to the Niranjana and from the Karbala to the Jordan. His was the life of perpetual baptism in the light and character of the '*New-Babe*'—on the lap of the Mother Divine. Benoyendranath in one of his lectures, cried out—"Oh ! What is a city without its temple!" He might as well have exclaimed, "Oh ! What is a temple without its fount—for the sanctifying bath !"

Though differing somewhat in the outward manifestations of their nature, all the three were essentially men of Faith, Hope and Charity, with the heart of ceaseless prayer,—which now takes the form of study and worship and then often of self-less service.

It is the earnest Prayer out of their devotional spirit, that built up their faith in the spirit of all dispensations of all times and countries—the self-revelations of God in all religions, scriptures and sayings and characters of all prophets, sages, and founders of religions. The ideals of all great men, the builders of history, leaders of movements and incidents ushering in new ages,—all inspired them. To them, all

**Prayer :
Faith in
Dispensation
on**

problems of life can find solutions if these ideals could be embodied in social-structure, family-life, arts and literatures, and in fact, in everything* that constitute life and culture. Faith was to them faith in God, in God's providence, His dispensation and the dispensation of all dispensations, His humanity—and in fact, in everything on earth and heaven. Every event is ordained by Him and sorrow and grief are merely passing phases, only to illuminate His benignant smile, —His *Mangalamay Rupam*. To them, Faith is the re-generating power that converts and transfigures men into divinity. It is 'evidence of things unseen and promise of things hoped for.'

The 'Trio' might be said to be the fruits of the devotional life that developed of itself in the spirit of the Faith of the New Dispensation. Faith to them was 'Direct Vision' (অপরোক্ষানুভূতি) and not blind faith, which was a contradiction in terms. It was Life eternal, Life in immortality, to be lived here on earth, as well as here-after in the company of the souls in the Universal Supreme Soul.** Faith calls up the dead into a new life and the living into life eternal,—ever new and fresh. The Ever-New knows no age, no decay,—nor death; but ever strings together all the new into an end-less garland of new-ness. It is the soul of Beauty and Music !

Pramathalal, Benoyendranath, Mohitchandra were all essentially men of Faith. To all the three, life was a perpetual Pilgrimage through the Prayer. Even then, the developments had some individual characteristics. If Benoyendranath and Mohitchandra grew up to be professors, with certain amount of emphasis on the intellectual side, —Pramathalal became a priest and pastor.

Faith of Pramathalal meant a life of perpetual baptism and conversion—the life of heaven and the heavenly life,

Faith : a
Direct
Vision : Life
Eternal

Pramathala-
l's Rupantar

* He is the supreme God, in whom merges the entire creation. He is the Lord of all beings, dwelling in them, controlling all their activities. He is the origin of all,—regulating life, growth and death.

**এস সর্বোত্তম এষ সর্বজ্ঞ এষোহস্তর্ধামোষ

যোনিঃ সর্বস্ত প্রভবাপ্যায়ো হি ভূতানাম—মাতৃকোপনিষদ

the life in abysmal depth of Beautitude in time and eternity. The dead past and the unborn future, all came out with a new life to surround him in all his devotional life-activities. All men and nature appeared to be transformed into spirit in him* (রূপান্তরিত) and his soul entered into the domain of the Supreme Lord.

To Benoyendranath, through his eyes of Faith, was opened up behind all cults and cultures, churches and temples, all ideas and ideals,—a new vision of life, which leads from heights to nobler heights,—to new blissful scenes in the panorama of human life. Even new chapters appeared to be written in the history of mankind and ‘fresh fields and pastures new’ were created for himself. To him, a believer in Dispensation, literature and religion have no pessimistic note about them. In fact, ‘Tragedy’ is a misnomer in the classification of dramas, which reflect physical life as it is lived, the moral life as it is practised and the cultural life as it is expressed in art and literature. There are of-course tragic incidents in dramas,—instances of deep sorrow, of noble sufferings and self-sacrifice, but all those lead to ‘unearthly’ happiness. Separation ends in union for all times and creations of higher conditions reveal themselves in evolutionary march towards perfection. For instance, Sakuntala’s suffering brought out womanly dignity and union at loftier level, in a heavenly atmosphere, creating the future history of India.

**Benoyendra-
nath's New
Vision of Life**

Faith kept Mohitchandra in perpetual childhood. More things of heaven and earth come to be known to the babes, than to the worldly-wise. His childhood opened up to him the secrets of nature, of mind and soul and of the Life Divine.

**Mohitchan-
dra's
Perpetual
Childhood**

The ‘Trio’ of the Prayer Meeting represented the spirit of joy,—the rich harvest as it were of this new season in the soil, treated, ploughed out and watered carefully by their predecessors in the *Mandali*. Even in their style of writing, there was a striking similarity in its charming freshness and simplicity, that must come out of pure self-less love.

Spirit of Joy It is aphoristic in conciseness and at the same time illuminative, suggestive and explicit of their inner significance. Their study,—philosophical, religious, scientific and literary, all were clothed in the new light of *Nababidhan* ; it lent their writings and sayings a grace, a depth, a foresight, a spirit of universality, with a capacity for the re-orientation of whatever was good in the past with those of the present, in the light of the spirit unfolding itself in and through all ages. Prataapachandra taught them,—“Humanity is infinitely progressive and combines all that is human anywhere. You are in the presence of living, quickening spirit of Omnipresent Divine Humanity”. Their scientific trend of mind was remarkable,—trying to keep themselves up-to-date. The spirit of growth and development was working throughout their lives.

**Their Style :
a Grace :
Ever-Progressive**

**Universality
& Harmony :
Pilgrimage
to Characters**

On the minds of the ‘Trio’ were stamped, Universality and Harmony,—in letters of gold. They would always feel one-ness with all,—in their study, interpretation, devotion and process of self-realisation. The ‘Trio’ would welcome with all their transparent, sincere heart of Prayer, Faith and Reverence, any new interpretation of the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Gita, the doctrines of Buddhism and the new light into the mysteries of Christianity and enthusiasm and zeal of Islam. The Rishis were re-living in their characters, the Saints in the blood-stream, Budha in the *nirvana* of the mind, Christ in the self-consecrated will, Mahammad as strength of the arms and Sri Chaitanya in the heart of union with the husband-soul, through inebriating love. Their entire lives were the course of Pilgrimage from character to character, in a spirit of Prayer.

In their feeling of reverence for the past, they were ancients of ancients. In the spirit of the age, they were very modern and carried in them the seeds of the future. They lived and grew in the spirit of all ages. They rose from perfection to perfection as things of beauty,—perfection in all stages of life. They had faith in all methods of devotional life and accepted their spiritual values.

**Eternal
Pilgrimage**

So their own Keshab-centric *Sadhana* or Christo-centric organisation or Krishna-centric cult did not prove of any

bug-bear to them. All growth comes from organised life, and organised life moves on in complete circle,—points on the circumference being centres round which other smaller particles move in circles. And these centres and the points on the circumference, all form one organic whole,—the points being centres and the centres being points of a circumference. All move in circles within circles, organically related and held together by one will or purpose dynamic. The lives of the 'Trio' were marked by intensity of purpose and in their scopes,—were as vast as Humanity in a short compass and as Eternity in every moment, charged and filled up as they were, with an eternal significance.

**Laws of
Growth**

Different phases can be marked in the evolution of the Brahmo Samaj Movements. Raja Ram Mohan Roy had his controversy with the Christian missionaries on the one side and the orthodox Hindu pundits on the other, on religious questions on Theistic basis. Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore in his 'Tattwabodhini Patrika' with Pundits Akshay Kumar Dutta and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar as Secretaries, discussed all questions on a philosophical and rationalistic point of view. The Maharshi was out and out an Indian in his outlook on life, and his spirit grew in the realisation of the Supreme Spirit, mainly under the influence of Upanishadic teachings. Keshabchandra freed religion and all questions of religious life from the Shastric trammels on one hand and rationalistic shibboleths on the other. He stood on direct contact with the Spirit in its transcendences, when the soul goes up in Prayer and the will is regulated by His voice revealed in our conscience, when the Soul of the soul descends in us as a living God. The soul in its adoration, flies up on the wings of the spirit, lifting itself up to higher and higher regions of its self-manifestations. The soul is then in full enjoyment of perfect freedom, peace and beatitude.

**Evolution
in Brahmo
Samaj**

The other Revival movements during the time, deeply stirring the minds of the people, were met by the Pilgrims of the Prayer Meeting, not with any controversial philosophical discussion or even by new orientation of the scriptures or practices of devotional life. As with Keshabchandra, so

**Reverence
for Revival
Movements**

also with this young Band, the Revival movements were met by a reverential feeling and understanding of the spirit by going deep into the spirit of worship, ingrained in them by their Prayer Meetings and by rising higher and higher in their spiritual life. This spirit of devotion to the Supreme Self or *Atman* is above all and works itself out, in and through Being.

**Truth is in
No Hurry**

This was the spirit in which the Pilgrims of the Prayer Meeting met all the opposite views. And this spirit disarmed all oppositions. They would not think of entering into any controversy with a disputant mood. With a strong conviction in their own faith, they met all oppositions, all negative approach or destructive criticism. "Truth is in no hurry. Truth has been, Truth is, Truth will be, whether it be accepted by the whole world or only by a part of it,"—this was Prof. Max Muller's dying message to Rishi Pratapchandra in 1899. It proved to be a source of inspiration for them in taking up a most liberal outlook on life and religion.

After Prmrathalal's death, Principal L. M. Chatterjee, the President of the Board of Studies, Dacca, wrote with reference to this aspect of his character—'His faith and optimism were proof against all the onslaughts of a sceptical age. In the midst of crumbling world, he held aloft God's banner that was entrusted to him. He could not meet the scoffing arguments of his friends, he did not even attempt to convince them by reasoning. He only said—God is through all existing things; the divine purpose has been unfolding itself, that God's love is not taken away from us.' Principal Chatterjee's beautiful delineation of this spirit of forbearance holds good equally well with the other two of the 'Trio'.

**The Upani-
shed & the
Gita**

The Hindu Revival movement brought a re-awakening of the Upanisadic spirit in the Brahmo Samaj. Pandit Sitanath Tattabhusan brought out new editions of some of the Upanisads, with his own notes and translations. Sri Nagendra Nath Chattopadhyay delivered a series of lectures in reply to those of the leading pandits of the Revival movement. The repercussion on the mind of Upadhaya Gour Gobnda Roy, the *guru* of the Trio in their studies of

the Indian philosophy, brought him out in a new light of the spirit. He published an edition of the Gita along with a collection of texts from the Vedanta and the Bhagabat, which he styled *Gita-Prapurti*,—the fulfilment of the teachings of the Gita. Another of his voluminous compilation—the *Gita Samanya-Vashya* clearly explains the harmony of all the annotations of Sankar, Ramanuja, Madhwyacharya, Ballav, Ananda Giri, Madhusudan, Sreedhar and others*—from the stand-point of pure monism, qualified monism, monism-cum-dualism and dualism. The texts in all the collections published by him (except the Gita) were arranged in an order expressive of the transcendence of the spirit as *Brahman* and His Immanence in every soul, as *Paramatman* or the Supreme Soul, the guiding and enlightening Spirit in the soul and then as *Bhagawan*—all embracing Spirit in all its glories of self-manifestation. The regenerating spirit, ushering in new ages with new types of character—higher ideals of life and a new evolution of humanity in higher and higher forms of civilization. He marked out these different stages in his collection, as — *Brahma-Balli*, *Aroha-Balli*, *Abaroha-Balli*. These may be said to be corresponding to the ‘Trinity’—the soul, the converting spirit and the regenerated spirit.

The minds of the Pilgrims of the Prayer Meeting reacted marvellously to the Revival Movements in their usual characteristic way, in the spirit of Pilgrimage through Prayer. In 1900, Benoyendranath delivered a series of three lectures on the Vedanta—‘The Intellectual Ideals of Upanishads’, ‘The Vedantic Philosophy’ and ‘Sankarcharya’s Doctrine of

**Benoyendra-
nath’s
Intellectual
Ideal &
The Poet**

*শঙ্করাচার্য—অদ্বৈতবাদ ; রামানুজ—ভক্তিবাদ (টীকা-শ্রীভাষ্য),
মাধ্বাচার্য—বিশিষ্টাদ্বৈতবাদ ; বলদেব,—(গীতাভূষণ টীকা) ভক্তি ও যুক্তির সমন্বয় ;
মধুসূদন—(গীতা গূঢ়ার্থদীপিকা) পদ ও বাক্য যোজনে অপরূপ ব্যাখ্যা ;
শ্রীধর স্বামী—শঙ্করের ভাষ্যের মর্মার্থ প্রচার,
সুবোধিনী টীকা, শঙ্কর ও আনন্দ গিরির টীকার অনুযায়ী ;
নীলকণ্ঠ সুরী—মহাভারতের টীকা ; (গীতার্থ-প্রকাশ) ;
বিশ্বনাথ চক্রবর্তী—গীতা সারার্থবর্ধিণী
আনন্দ গিরি—গীতা ভাষ্য-বিবেচন ;
হুম্মান—(“পৈশাচ ভাষ্য”) ইহা ভক্তি প্রধান ।

Liberation'. They were subsequently published in 1902, as a book—'The Intellectual Ideal'. These new and beautiful expositions of the Upanishads were highly appreciated by all. Poet Rabindranath was all admiration for the book and wrote a beautiful letter to Benoyendranath, of which the following are extracts—

শ্রদ্ধাস্পদেষু—

আপনাকে পঞ্চভূত পাঠাইবার পর আপনার Intellectual Ideal বইখানি পড়িয়া শেষ করিয়াছি। পড়িয়া আপনার প্রতি যেমন কৃতজ্ঞতা অনুভব করিয়াছি, তেমনি লজ্জা বোধ করিলাম। পঞ্চভূতে আমি নানাবিধ বিষয়ে হস্তক্ষেপ করিয়াছি, অথচ সে সকল বিষয় বলিবার আমার কোনও অধিকার নাই।

আপনার বইখানি আমাকে অত্যন্ত সুগভীর ভাবে আকর্ষণ করিয়াছে। আপনি যদি কেবল দার্শনিকের মতো লিখিতেন, তবে আমি আনন্দ ও শিক্ষা হইতে বঞ্চিত হইতাম,—কারণ দর্শনশাস্ত্রে আমি অনভিজ্ঞ। জ্ঞানের কথাকে আপনি কল্পনার দ্বারা দীপ্যমান করিয়া তুলিয়াছেন। আপনি যে বেদান্তের মধ্যে কেবল পথ করিয়া চলিয়াছেন, তাহাও নহে, প্রদীপও ধরিয়াছেন। শাস্ত্রে প্রবেশ করিবার জগু কঠোর তপস্বী চাই, তাহাও আপনার আছে এবং সেই শাস্ত্রকে নিজের করিয়া লইবার যে সহজ-প্রতিভা, তাহারও অভাব আপনাতে নাই এবং যাহা লাভ করিলেন, তাহাকে আলোকের শ্রায় বিকীর্ণ করিবার শক্তিও আপনি প্রকাশ করিয়াছেন।...ইহাতে আপনার সঙ্গ বড় লোভনীয় হইয়া উঠিয়াছে।...আপনারা যেমন করিয়া চিন্তা করেন, সেটা আমার মধ্যে সঞ্চারিত হইতে পারে।

শুভ-দৈবক্রমে মোহিতবাবুর সহিত আমার আলাপ হইয়াছে—আলাপের চেয়ে অনেক বেশী হইয়াছে, বলিতে পারি। তিনি আমাকে আপনাদের সকলের দিকেই আকর্ষণ করিয়া লইয়াছেন। তাঁহার সহিত সম্বন্ধেই আপনাদের সকলের সহিত আমার সম্বন্ধ হইয়াছে। সেই সম্বন্ধ পাকা করিবার জগু আমি সুযোগের অপেক্ষা করিতেছি।

আপনাদিগকে আমার প্রয়োজন আছে। আমাদের দেশে ভাবুক শ্রেণী বিরল—জ্ঞানের সঙ্গে, ভাবের সঙ্গে একেবারে নড়ীর সম্পর্ক এমন লোক অল্প বলিয়া, আমার মানস-প্রকৃতি যেন ক্ষুধিত হইয়া থাকে। ভাবকে মানুষের মধ্য হইতে গতি-বিশিষ্ট সজীব প্রত্যক্ষ করিবার যে ক্ষুধা, তাহা বাতি আলিয়া কোনে বসিয়া, লাইব্রেরীর মধ্যে নিজেকে জীর্ণ করিয়া কিছুতেই তৃপ্তি হয়না। বাহিরের প্রকৃতি হইতে যেমন অব্যবহিত নিগূঢ় ভাবে আনন্দ পাই, তেমনি মানুষের মনের অব্যবহিত সংস্পর্শ হইতে জ্ঞান ও ভাব সহজে লাভ করিবার জন্ত আমার পিপাসা। আমি অধ্যয়ন-পরায়ণ তপস্বী সম্প্রদায়ভুক্ত নহি। আপনার গ্রন্থের মধ্যে আপনি নিজেকে বর্তমান রাখিয়াছেন বলিয়া, ইহার ভিতর আপনার মানব-হৃদয়ের সংস্রব পাইয়াছি বলিয়া, এই গ্রন্থ হইতে এত উপকার পাইলাম।...অতি লুক্ক ক্ষুধিতের মতো আমি আপনাদিগকে চাহিতেছি—

আপনাদের দ্বারা আমার এই শান্তিনিকেতনে নিভৃত উদার প্রান্তরকে সজীব ও শান্তিনিকেতনের উন্মুক্ত অনাময় সমীরণের মধ্যে রস-হিল্লোল সমীরিত করিতে ইচ্ছা করিতেছি। নব্য-ভারতের তপোবন আপনাদ্বারা রচনা করিবেন, সেখানে নব্য-ভারতের নবীন বাসের ব্রহ্মসূত্র উচ্চারিত ও নবীন দ্বৈপায়নের নব-মহাভারত গীত হইবে—সেখানে সকল প্রকার চিত্তবিক্ষেপ-বিহীন উদার শান্তির মধ্যে, তপস্তা ও প্রতিভা সৌন্দর্য্যে সম্মিলিত হইয়া, উর্দ্ধমুখী হোম-শিখার শ্রায় অনন্তের অভিমুখে উচ্ছ্বসিত হইবে।

আপনার—

১২ই ফাল্গুন, ১৩০৮

শ্রীরবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর। 1902

In these lines. the poet of love sends his loving invitation to the kindred hearts of the Pilgrims of the Prayer Meeting, for Pilgrimage together, towards the Infinite.

Another very striking appreciation of the 'Intellectual Ideal' is from the famous oriental scholar, Lord Ronaldshay, at one time, the Governmental head in Bengal. In his book, —'The Heart of Aryabarta', he introduced Benoyendranath as

Lord Ronaldshay's 'Heart of Aryabarta'

the 'polished scholar and a fine product of a combination of Indian culture and Western education'. The following is Lord Ronalshay's beautiful synopsis of Benoyendranath's 'Intellectual Ideal'—

"Benoyendranath defines *Sruti* as the record of the soul of genius in its highest exaltation and the sensuous world as an aspect of God Himself. Had the texture woven by the world-spirit in the loom of time not been the visible garment of God Himself, had the universe not been the self-revelation of God,—the idea of God could never have occurred to the mind of man. Shut up in the hard opaque prison-house of matter, with pleasures and death for his masters, man would have never thought of God at all."

"If that is so, if the universe is the divine exuberance blooming into a perpetual efflorescence,—two pertinent questions occurred to Benoyendranath's mind and he finds their lucid answers too. The first question is,—how can the Infinite and Absolute admit of anything different from itself? And secondly, how can a world of sin and suffering be from a perfect God?"

"Benoyendranath's beautiful answer, to the first is—'The Infinite Enchanter has contrived to put His own substance, which must be of the character of the Infinite and the Absolute, into this texture which is woven in space and time'. In his explanation of Maya, Benoyendranath dwells upon two characteristics attributed to it by Sankar,—first, that of manifesting itself through name and form, and secondly, that of being not determinable either by Being or Non-being."

Infinite &
Absolute in
our Texture

"Benoyendranath's answer to the second pertinent question is—'If sorrow had been only the soul of bitterness and joy only the over-flowing of bliss, you might have charged God with partiality in distributing joy and sorrow unequally. But, if sorrow has in its depths a hidden fountain of joy, and joy rests on a basis of deepest pain; even if within the darkness of sin, there is a hidden power that maketh for righteousness—there is no inequality to complain

Sorrow & Joy

of'. Every high or low, great or small, is equally a reflection of the Infinite in the finite."

Benoyendranath declares—"The Upanishads teach that the ideal of the intellect is wonder and reverence. Not wonder and reverence at the sacrifice of knowledge, or in opposition to it; but when knowledge has been brought to its utmost heights, even that of realising that *reason* is the Lord of the universe,—there is still a mysterious beyond, higher than *reason*, into which the intellect must look and lose itself in that mystery—the *Faith*. I hold it truth that the intellect in its highest operation is intuitive and not discursive. The operations of reason we can analyse and know, but towards the Infinite, the only attitude that is possible is *communion*. To those ancient Rishis, the privilege was given not simply to speculate and speak about meta-physical abstractions, but with purified hearts and devoted souls to hold communion* with that, which is beyond all speech or speculation. One realised in that communion, the highest bliss of life "

**Intellect
Wonder,
Reverence
Knowledge :**

**Reason &
Faith**

Communion

For some time, on Sundays, Benoyendranath delivered a series of lectures on the 'Studies on Gita', in the Bharat-varshya Brahmo Mandir, in connection with its Theological classes and also in the Presidency College and the University Institute. Benoyendranath's worthy wife, Sm Shakuntala Devi, was good enough to take down notes on the lectures and only four could be fairly transcribed from these, to be published in the form of a booklet,—the 'Geeta Adhyayan' (গীতা অধ্যয়ন). These lectures were listened to with great interest by a host of admiring audience, one of the most enthusiastic of whom was the great philosopher, Professor Mohendra Nath Sarkar of the Presidency College, then a student of the Fourth Year Claas. The introduction to the

*ঐক্যবেদমমৃতং পুরস্তাদ্ভ্রঙ্গ দক্ষিণতশ্চোজ্জরেন ।

অধশ্চোদ্ধিঃ প্রবৃত্তং ঐক্যবেদং বিশ্বমিদং বরিষ্ঠম্ ॥ —যুগল উপনিষদ ২।২।২২

Brahma, as the symbol of Immortality, is in our fore-front. He is at our back, on our right and left, the pervades the lower and higher worlds, in fact. He is the Supreme Being, revealed as the vast creation.

Geeta
Adhyayan

book, written by Prof. Sarkar, describes clearly the deep impression left on the minds of the audience. The following excerpts reveal the eloquence and special features of those lectures—

“...বিনয়েন্দ্রনাথের গীতাপাঠ শুনিবার জন্য আমাদের কেমন একটা তীব্র আকাঙ্ক্ষা হইত। ...তিনি শুধু জ্ঞানী ছিলেন না, তিনি ছিলেন সাধক, ধ্যানী। তাঁর হৃদয় ছিল শ্রদ্ধায় পূর্ণ, সত্ত্বা ছিল সাত্বিকী।... হৃদয়-মন্দিরে যে পূজা গভীর প্রেমাবেগে হৃদয়-স্বামীর সহিত নিবিড় মিলনের আনন্দ দেয়, বিশ্বমন্দিরে জীবন-দেবতার পূজার হিল্লোল তেমনই প্রাণের কম্পন সৃষ্টি করে।...বিনয়েন্দ্রনাথ ব্যষ্টির ও সমষ্টির, বিশ্বের জীবন-লহরীর ভিতর বিশ্বনাথের পূজা দেখিতে পাইতেন। তাই তাঁহার নিকট জ্ঞান, ভক্তি ও বিজ্ঞানের যেকোন আদর ছিল, ইতিহাসেরও তেমনই আদর ছিল। ইতিহাসের ভিতর দিয়া তিনি শ্রীভগবানের বিশ্ব-লীলার পরিচয় পাইতেন।

ঈশ্বরকে জীবনের ভিতর দিয়া, সমাজের ভিতর দিয়া, প্রেমের নিত্য-নূতন মধুরিমার ভিতর দিয়া পাওয়া,—ছিল তাঁর মতে, পূর্ণরূপে পাওয়া। ধ্যানের মৌনভাবের সহিত, কৰ্ম্মের অফুরন্ত আবেগের ও প্রেমের আত্ম-নিবেদনের পূর্ণ সম্মিলন,—তাঁহার ছিল শিক্ষার আদর্শ। এই কথাগুলি, তাঁহার গীতার ব্যাখ্যার যে অংশটুকু আমরা পাইতেছি, তাহাতে বেশ পরিষ্কাররূপে ফুটিয়াছে।”

Manduk'
-Upanishad

Mohitchandra rendered into English verse the 'Manduk-
Upanishad' in his own light. This received high apprecia-
tion from many and Upadhya, Gour Govinda was charmed
with its new interpretations and said that although a free
translation, the book expressed beautifully in a condensed
form, the Upanishadic *Sadhana*—the devotional life of the
Rishis, in its different stages of development.

Study of
Lives of
Saints

Pramathalal especially studied, with a spirit of devotion,
rarely to be seen, the lives and writings of the Indian and
Christian saints of the middle age, from Nanak and Chaitanya
to St. Francis de Assisi. In his mission-work for more than
a quarter of a century from 1907 to 1930, through his life and

upashanas and as Editor of 'Nababidhan', the Mandali organ, he was a Pilgrim indeed ! His sermons, lectures and prayers were the elements of the spiritual life and as such, free from controversies with the contemporary Revival Movements.

When Sree Ramkrishna Paramhangsa appeared in all his saintliness, simplicity and homeliness of spiritual life and with his naive suggestiveness, presented a new and fresh interpretation of different forms and images of Hindu deities, specially of the Mother Kali,—he attracted the minds even of the men of the Brahmo samaj, specially of those who came in contact with the spiritual life and ventures of Keshabchandra, in his realisation of the form-less Spirit.

There developed a spirit of kinship between these two saintly minds. Sri Ramkrishna could well understand the position that Brahmananda Keshab Chandra took up and the latter too understood him*. Sree Ramkrishna would come to Keshabchandra and the latter would also go to the former. The first meeting between the two great souls was a fascinating episode indeed. In March 1875, Sree Ramkrishna with his nephew Hriday, drove from Dakshineswar in a hackney-carriage to Brahmananda Keshabchandra's *Sadhan Kanan* at Belgharia, where the latter was in the midst of religious exercises (সাধন) along with his associates. Sree Ramkrishna had only a short red-bordered Dhoty on and there was nothing above his loins. Without any preamble, he at once addressed those present, thus —“Well Babus, I have heard that you see God. Just tell me, what is that”. After some enthralling

**Keshab &
Ramkrishna
Paramhansa**

*When we were young, we were taken by Keshab to his friend, Paramansa. One by one, most of us came to know him personally. Hirananda was the apple of his eye and Nandalal used to sing to him. In those days (1881) Vivekananda was not there. The thing that struck us most in him,—was the freedom from cant. He was not like the ordinary *Sanyasis* or *Sadhus*. He hated with a deep hatred, all pretensions to *Sadhugiri* or *Gurugiri*. The new spiritual freedom for which Keshab stood, was in the Paramhansa too. This was one of the reasons why we took to him so naturally. To speak of such a Ramkrishna as *Avatar* ! The age of miracle—meaning violation of the law of God, continues in the nineteenth century, after Carlyle wrote about Natural Super-naturalisms !—Pramathalal.

conversation with the party, Sree Ramkrishna fell into a trance.

Then again, we have it from no less a personage than Mahatma Aswini Kumar Dutta as eye witness, the vivid description of Sree Ramkrishna rushing down to Keshabchandra, when the latter was immersed in *Kirtan* on board the steamer, going up-stream along Dakshineswar, and dancing in ecstasy, holding Keshabchandra in his arms. He started crying out—"You are my *Shyam*, I am the *Radha*". On the day previous to the passing away of Keshabchandra, Ramkrishna, visited him on his death-bed and cried out in anguish—"Oh, Mother dear ! Please do not take away Keshab ; how am I to live without him ?"

First Life-Sketch by
Rev. Girish
Ch. Sen ,
1875

Revered Girish Chandra Sen, a close associate of Keshabchandra, at the latter's inspiration brought out in 1875, the first life-sketch and some sayings of Sree Ramkrishna. Keshabchandra was writing about Sree Ramkrishna in his papers—'Sulav Samacher' (the first Bengalee one-pice paper), 'Dharma-tattwa', 'The New Dispensation', 'Indian Mirror' (the first English paper brought out by an Indian) from 1875-1883. Rishi Pratapchandra in 1876, wrote about Sree Ramkrishna in the 'Sunday Mirror' and also translated some of the saint's sayings in English. This, according to Swami Vivekananda, introduced the glory of the saint to Prof. Max-muller and was 'the only material with the professor, to enable him to write his book, 'Ramkrishna—His Life and Teachings', with some reflections of his own. The professor recognises the value* of Pratapchandra's witness as 'there is a ring of truth and impartiality about it and there is no sign of any propaganda.'

The genius of Keshabchandra explored even the stage for the propagation of the ideals of his Nababidhan. And whatever this 'tremendously real' man did, had tremendous

* In the 1951 Ed. of this book, we find,—"Bickerings and Cavalings would have been most distasteful both to Keshab and Ramkrishna, who had no words but words of praise and love for each other, and it was a great pity that their mutual relations should have been treated in any other way, thereby the facts being totally mis-represented. Neither did Ramkrishna act as Curu nor Keshabchandra Sen as Sishya."

success. A short time before his last rest, Chiranjeeb Trailokya Nath Sanyal's drama 'Naba-Brindaban' was staged. This drama was regarded as one of the best, of that time in respect of dramatic situations. The drama depicted a picture of the then Bengali society and the underlying theme was to show that all the different paths of religion converge into and lead to one goal—the attainment of the one Holy Bliss. Observance of the principle of harmonising *Joga, Bhakti, Karma, Jnan* in our lives, will remove all troubles in our family and social lives. The rest-less world of greed and corruption will then be transformed into a 'Nababrindaban'—a new heaven of peace and tranquillity, where joy of love always prevails.*

Nababrindaban & Vivakananda

The performances of the drama were at Keshabchandra's residence,—the 'Kamal Kuthir' and also at the residences of some of the big men of the time, before the elites of the city, amongst whom was Sri Ramkrishna Paramhansadeb himself, on one occasion. Pandit Khiti Mohan Sen Shastri thinks that the cue to the new name 'Vivekananda, with which Narendranath was decorated, may be found in this performance of the 'Nababrindaban'.

The casts in the drama were distributed amongst Keshabchandra and his friends, but two small roles with songs, that of *Viveka* and *Bairagya* were beautifully played, respectively by Narendranath (afterwards the great Swami Vivekananda) and Monamatha Dhon Dey (later a famous songster and violinist) the son of revered Kedar Nath Dey, a missionary of Naba Bidhan. Both were quite young at that time, and their sweet songs charmed everybody. Sree Ramkrishna could never forget them**.

*চির-শান্তিনিকেতন, এই নব-বৃন্দাবন, ভেদাভেদ অভিমান নাহিক তথায় ;
চল যাই ত্বরা করি, বদনে বলিয়া হরি, সশরীরে স্বর্গ-বাস করিব ধরায় ।”
যোগ-ভক্তি-কর্ম-জ্ঞান সবাকার সম্মিলন, ধর্মসম্বন্ধ জয় প্রেমানন্দে গায়
“সেই নব-বৃন্দাবনে, নিত্য লীলা দরশনে,—করিব সদলে স্বর্গবাস ।”

***It was I who introduced him to Keshab and he came to be selected to act and do some singing in the *Nababrindaban*. He used to call me *Hazrat*, in fondness One day, Ramchandra Dutta brought Paramhansadev to our *Upashana*. He was pleased and at the end he started

When the funeral-procession of Sree Ramkrishna reached the cremation-ground, the bier was placed on the side of the Ganges. All sat down on the bare ground, deeply mourning. It was the several soul-stirring songs of Chiranjib Trailokya Nath Sanyal, the minstrel of Nababidhan, that moved the crowd to tears and consoled them.

Truth of
Prevails

Later, as the members of the Ramkrishna Mission claimed Keshabchandra as one baptised into a new life of devotion by the spirit of Sree Ramkrishna, the Prayer Meeting Band brushed it aside, being ever confident that Truth will finally prevail in some shape***. They continued with their usual occasional pilgrimages to Dakshineswar and Belur. How happy they must have been feeling, whenever they saw the large photo of the God-intoxicated *Bhakta*, standing in a trance, as is to be found in the group-photo taken at the

an ecstatic *Kirtan* himself. Then he told Naren—"Tor gaan shune ami boro khusi hayechi. Tool amar Kache Jaas". From then the intellectual rationalist (*Brahmagnani Brahmo*) eventually became St. Paul of the *Paramhansa*."—Bhai Pryanath Mallik.

"১৮৭২ খৃঃ হইতে কমলকুটীরে প্রতি রবিবার দুপুরে কেশবচন্দ্র আমাদের মতন একঘণ্টা করিয়া উপদেশ ও শিক্ষা দিতেন। ঠিক যেন তিনিও আমাদের মতন একজন, এইভাবে মিশিতেন। নরেন্দ্র দত্ত ঐ শিক্ষার্থে যেতেন।... 'নববৃন্দাবন' নাটক অভিনয় দেখিয়া ধন্য হইয়াছি। এই নাটকে কেশবচন্দ্র পাণ্ডাডী বাবা লাজিয়াছিলেন ও নরেন্দ্রনাথ (বিবেকানন্দ) ঋত্বিক (?) সাজিয়াছিলেন। অভিনয় দেখিতে লোকেরা ভাঙ্গিয়া পড়িত।" ,—জ্ঞানেন্দ্র বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, এলাহাবাদ।

"নরেন্দ্র নাথ দত্ত বালক-বয়সে সুকণ্ঠ ছিলেন। শোনা যায়, তিনি ও মন্থক ধন দে (তিনিও সুকণ্ঠ ছিলেন), কেশব চন্দ্র সেনের 'নব-বৃন্দাবন' নাটকে অংশ গ্রহণ করেন। নরেন্দ্র নাথ বিবেক-এর ভূমিকায় এবং মন্থক 'বৈরাগ্য'র ভূমিকায় নামেন। আরও শোনা যায়, বিবেকানন্দ নাম, নরেন্দ্রনাথ যেচ্ছায় গ্রহণ করেন—এই শ্রুতি থেকে।" ,—প্রভাত কুমার মুখোপাধ্যায়, বোলপুর।

*** Sister Nivedita said, "Keshab was the main source of ferment that worked up the youth-movement, not only of the Brahmo Samaj, but also the youth-movement in the Ramkrishna Mission of Swami Vivekananda."

'Kamalkutir'* (Keshabchandra's residence), hanging over the entrance to the old Belur Math.

Similarly, when the Christians also claimed Keshabchandra as one of them, the significant reply came from Benoyendranath, that Keshabchandra had the spirit of Christ in him, but he was not a Christian,—in as much as, Christ himself was not a Christian.

In the course of a series of lectures on Christianity, the great orator and Christian Missionary, Reverend Kali Charan Banerjee rather severely criticised the Brahmo religion. Benoyendranath gave a fitting but very sober reply, which was both learned and extremely dignified. This was attended by Rev. Banerjee, who was simply charmed and like a true sportsman, congratulated Benoyendranath on his masterly way of marshalling the arguments, but above all, for his courtesy and humility. He remarked—"Benoyendranath has really been true to his name". This is the real spirit of the Pilgrimage through Prayer of the Prayer Meeting Band. The Christ-spirit could never be creed-bound and was free—free as the air we breathe in, free as the spirit itself with all its revelations.

**Pilgrims &
Christ**

The great writer Rishi Bankimchandra, after his retirement intended to preach the 'Sanatan Hindu Religion' among the masses. Sree Bepin Chandra Pal writes that Bankimchandra used to attend the Sunday *Upashanas* in the Nababidhan Mandir, to learn 'Keshab's Bengalee', which was most suited for mass-contact. Bankimchandra in the first edition of his book 'Dharma Tatwa-Anusilan', stated (omitted by its later publishers) that Keshabchandra, who was a *Baidya*, was gifted with the noble traits of character of the best *Brahmins* and should be held in deep veneration, even by them. This is the true spirit of all religions**.

**Keshab &
Bankimchan-
dra**

*Photo taken on 21st September, 1879.

**The other chief Revival movements were—(1) Those of Sree Sasadhar Tarkachuramani and Krishna Prosad Sen (Krishnanda Swami) the two vigorous exponents of Sanatan Barnasram Hinduism, with emphasis on the traditional rites and rituals. (2) Swami Dayananda's Arya Samaj and Swami Sradhananda's Gurukul Asram, based on the Vedas, (3) The Theosophical Society, with S. J. Narendra Nath Sen as the President of its Bengal branch, (4) Bijoy Krishna Goswami's Guru Sect,

Pilgrims & Nature

The 'Trio' were of poetic temperament and ardent lovers of Nature. The entire Prayer Meeting Band had a passion for the beauties of Nature. With the hurry and scurry of the city-life and with its smoky, noisy atmosphere, Calcutta did not appear to be a congenial place for the quiet development of their spiritual self. Some of the members would gather together in the evenings and go to the Maidan, the Strand by the Ganges, the Eden Gardens, the Pareshnath Temple or some such quiet places, for a closer communion with Nature.

There, they would sit or walk together, sometimes rapt in deep silent meditation or engaged in gentle conversation for their spiritual up-lift. When there were some among them who could sing, the time would be most fruitfully taken up in songs, to waft up the soul to the Lord of Nature. Even when very busy, they would not miss a stroll round the *Goldighi* or *Hedua*. The meetings would always end in prayers.

The week-ends or short holidays, would often find them increase their radius of wanderings a little further—to the Botanical Gardens, Dakhineswar, Belur or the group had a Rajgunj steamer-trip, downsteam the Ganges. Occasionally Bajra (big country-boat with cabins), or even chartered steamer trips were arranged, when they could get off for two or three days at a stretch.

Their Picnics

Picnics were the usual features in such outings and *khichuri* was always the favourite dish. In this connection, one would recollect with pleasure that with Messrs. Sen Bros., cooking was a strong point. As amateurs, they could beat any professional in this difficult job. *khichuri* was their speciality and Rajendranath, the third brother of Benoyendranath was the master cook. While in London, Pramathalal after doing full justice to *khichuri* cooked by the *khichuri*-specialist Rajendranath, remarked,—'Rajen, no wonder you cook so well. He who prays well must cook well too, for both are products of an intensely loving and devotional spirit'.

On longer vacations,—the Pujah and the Summer, they would go out in groups, on pilgrimage to famous places of interest e.g. Tajmahal at Agra, Ajanta-Ellora Caves, the Narbada Falls and Marble Rocks, or to the hill stations. Like earnest pilgrims, they would be in a spirit of worship everywhere, particularly in places where the bounty of Nature was lavish in spreading its charms. They would always return to the friends in Calcutta and shower all the fulness of their hearts and re-filled them with the plenitude of spirit.

**Pilgrimage
is a Spirit of
Prayer**

On one Pujah vacation in 1896, a pilgrimage was arranged to Chittagong. It was not so much the cordial invitation from Benoyendranath's 'relative-friend'* that attracted the party there, but the interest in the place was created in their minds through the lovely pictures of the beauties of the place drawn before them by Rishi Pratapchandra. He visited Chittagong twice for *prachar* and his soul-stirring lectures and Upashanas, attracted the young-men of the place and laid the foundation of the Brahmo Samaj there,—further nurtured by hard work of Revered Peary Mohan Choudhury.

Chittagong impressed the Rishi very much. The mountain ranges lining the horizon, the rivers meandering unto the sea, the green wood-paths, (where one can wander about for miles and miles), the beautiful water-falls here and there— all lent charms to its beauty.

The town is built upon a hilly tract, with streets running up and down the slopes, with picturesque bungalows on top of small hills on either side of the streets—the entire panorama moved Rishi Pratapchandra so much, that he was all-admiration for the place. He compared it with the Rocky Wales and it was a land of mystery to him. He looked upon the town with the eyes of a poet and a worshipful soul, in deep communion with Mother of Nature.

**Chittagong
Pilgrimage**

The Pilgrim party consisted of Benoyendranath, Mohitchandra, Sureshchandra, Lalitmohon, Khetrāmohan, Jnanendramohon, Kalinath, Satyendranath and a few others.

There were no Railways to Chittagong those days and the journey had to be made across the Bay. On the previous

* The Author—Benimadhab.

Rudra &
His Daksina-
Mukham

night before the date fixed for start, the weather-forecast was—'Stormy'. Any way, the ship did start on her voyage, according to schedule, but when she reached the Bay, she found herself in the midst of a violent storm. All were astir on board,—but were the Pilgrims afraid? No, not in the least. None of the party did have any experience of the sea, not to speak of a stormy one. They were struck with wonder at the sight and roar of the violent waves splashing on the ship. They sat down, to worship—the splendour of God of Power and Force, the *Rudra** with His *Leela* on the white foamy crests of the waves, was a revelation for them in their *Aradhana*. Fortunately the storm abated, *Rudra's Daksina Mukham* was seen and the rest of the journey was pleasant.

They woke up early in the dawn, the next day—the glowing sun in front, on the distant eastern horizon of a calm sea. They sat down to worship—the *Aradhana* this time was focussed on the blessing and inspiring aspect of the Divine Mother**, on Her majestic crimson throne.

At Chittagong. The Pilgrims were accommodated in a comfortable bungalow, a School building on top of a small hill, butting on the road leading a short distance ahead, to the beautiful Court buildings on the highest peak of the town. The days passed by them, were all real festive occasions. Every day was a day-long *utsab*—a veritable feast of the spirit.

* The attitude of the Prayer Meeting Pilgrims revives in our mind the vision of *Nataraj* (the supreme 'Sovereignty of Dance' in Indian mythology) in his *Tandab Nritya* with restless vigour, in the lines of poet Rabin-drath—

“প্রলয় নাচন নাচলে যখন আপন ভুলে,—হে নটরাজ !
জটীর বাঁধন পড়ল খুলে ।”

** That of the beauty and all-pervasive power,—the scene as experienced by the Rishis of old, chanting--

“বিশ্বরূপং হরিণং জাতবেদসং
পরায়ণং জ্যোতিরেকং কপন্তম ।
সহস্ররশ্মি শতধা বর্তমানং

প্রাণঃ প্রজানামুদয়তোষ সূর্য্যঃ ।”—প্রশ্নোপনিষৎ—১।৮

“Behold, there arises the sun on the red rim of the horizon, with its myriads of light-rays, illuminating our intelligence. It is the source of life giving energy sustaining all the forces of vitality and life divine.”

—Songs, Kirtans, Upashanas, religious Discussions and Public Lectures constituted the programme. During the intervening off-times, they were all joy. The Prayerful Band became playful—their peals of laughter freely coming out from their pure hearts, were interspersed with their talks, full of sparkling humour and wit. The catering was in careful charge of Sriyuts Kailashchandra Datta and Monoranjan Gupta. The philosopher Mohitchandra could be a child again with a child, for whom he composed entertaining rhymes. The child was taught to chirp, when asked the name of the father—

“My daddy is..... Das
By the side of Jack-fruit tree is his *nibash*
For all, he cuts grass”.

**Pilgrims
and the
Child**

And the party would, cry out in chorus—*Sabash ! Sabash !*

When asked the name of the mother, the child would blurt out—

‘On the creeper there are *Karalas*,
My nummie and my aunties are—‘*Saralas*’

The names of both Benoyendranath’s and Mohitchandra’s sisters are Saralas and so is the name of Pramathalal’s first cousin. The Saralas were great friends and of the same age. They are also referred to among their friends, as ‘Trio’.

The party had a trip to Chandranath and all went up the hill, which, though not very high, was a steep climb. It was doubtful if the ‘town-mice’ could brave it. But, lo and behold ! Mohitchandra, the heaviest of the lot was the first to reach the top and Benoyendranath, the next best so far as bulk goes, a close second—when the rest of the party was only half-way up. It is the spirit that wafted them on its wings along the flights of steps.

Mohitchandra with the child-spirit in him, was full of ecstasy,—waving the Nababidhan flag in hand, shouting joyfully like a boy. Benoyendranath was standing like a statue with a calm silence about him, deeply absorbed in himself,—the two hands clasped over the breast. Both were sights for the gods to see.

**Mohitchan-
dra Wins
Hill-Race**

**The Water-
Falls &
Spring**

The party went to see a water-fall, three miles further on, leaping down into the valley covered with beautiful forest, with sweet music of silence in the air. From here, they went to Barabkunda, another spring with fire dancing with lolling tongues on the surface of the pool. They had their bath in the springs and then sat down for their *upashana* and for silent communion with the soul of beauty and mysteries of Nature. Principal Lalitmohon's description of this trip is so beautiful, that one can scarcely resist the temptation of quoting a few extracts from it—

**Evils Washed
Away**

"I love to recall a walking tour of our Prayer Meeting Band from Chittagong to the sacred places of pilgrimage of the district. As we walked through the wooded solitude, there broke unexpectedly upon the silence a loud and continuous note, as if the fingers of a hundred wood-nymphs were sweeping a hundred strings of a harp. We were told that the sound was produced by a tree-cricket. Our minds at that time were attuned to solemn thoughts—for the scenery was beautiful and a holy silence pervaded the whole atmosphere. The effect of this sudden strain from invisible minstrels was indescribable. When we came to a tiny water-fall, we went and stood under it—and imagined that all evil in us was being washed away."

**The Exhilarating
and the Day-
Dreamer**

"As we approached the Chandranath Hill, we met people who told us that a tiger had been seen in the locality, which gave us a thrill of excitement. Coming to the base of the hill, we began to climb. It was a small hill, but we had recently read Dante's *Purgatorio* and we had strong imaginations. As we followed up the steep path, we thought we were mounting from circle to circle of *Purgatorio*, like Dante guided by the shade of Virgil. Lo! after going a little way up, we got a glimpse of the far-off 'trembling sea'. In our climb, the most inspiring companion was Mohitchandra. Benoyendranath was silent, rapt in thought,—receptive. He had a day-dreaming look which was taking in the beauties of Nature. Mohitchandra was exhilarating. There was a broken temple on top of the hill, but we discovered beautiful temples in our hearts of Pilgrimage."

The party returned to Calcutta by sea, and as they were not used to these physical strains, all fell ill ; —Benoyendranath alone escaped.

The first Indian Pilgrim to visit the West was Raja Ram Mohan Ray, the 'Father of Modern India', in 1831. From his letter published in the 'Athenium' of London, we find a strong desire in him to visit Europe, in order to obtain by personal observation, a thorough insight into its manners, customs, religions and political institutions. Poet Rabindranath calls him a 'Traveller in India's Path' (ভ্রমত-পথিক) and to the great Philosopher, Acharya Brojendranath, Rammohan is the 'Universal man'. The combination of these two pictures of Rammohan, drawn by the Poet and the Philosopher, shows him up as a true Pilgrim.

**Rammohan :
First Pilgrim
Abroad**

In the path of 'Pilgrimage through Prayer' of the Prayer Meeting Band, Keshabchandra, the apostle of Prayer and Harmony was their Hero. And who would be an abler leader than he ? Keshabchandra went to England in 1870, in the spirit of a true Pilgrim - to gather rich harvest of ideas and ideals from abroad and on the other hand to distribute the spiritual riches of his own country to the needy, rest-less West. About his own final gains, Keshabchandra himself says in his Fare-well address, in England—

**Keshabchan-
dra the
Pilgrim :
their Hero**

"I came here an Indian, I go back a confirmed Indian, I have learnt to love my own country more. I came here a Theist, I return a confirmed Theist ; I came here a believer in the Father-hood of God and the Brother-hood of man, and return confirmed in that belief. I have tried as far as possible, to imbibe the blessed influence of Christian lives. I have seen here the same God and I am now, thank God, a man belonging to the world at large. From Her Majesty down to the poorest peasant, I have received cordial welcome and sympathy. My heart will be always with you and England will always be in my heart. Farewell ! Dear England, 'with all thy faults,—I love thee still'. Farewell ! Country of Shakespeare and Newton, land of Liberty and Charity. Farewell ! My temporary abode of brotherly and sisterly love. Farewell ! My Father's Western House."

**Idea of
U. N. O.
and Church
Universal :
in 1870**

Keshabchandra finally pleaded for a Union between the nations. It was an early conception of the idea of a 'League of Nations' or a 'United Nations Organisation,' in 1870 ! His message to the world at war—"Receive from one another the good things of each to form a true 'Church Universal', where spiritual fervour and activity of material civilisation would harmonise".

**Deeply
Regrets
Lack of
Spirituality**

And whoever did point out so boldly and so clearly England's failings ? It is not to be forgotten that this was done in England and in the year Eighteen Hundred and Seventy ! He deeply deplored the lack of spirituality amongst the Englishmen in general and he said—"In England there is hardly any spirit of Meditation to enjoy the realisation of a Living and Loving God and to have solitary Communion with Him."

**Boldly Points
out Defects
in Adminis-
trators :
Right
Asserted :
1870**

He grimly felt the absence of true Christ spirit in the British administration of India and pointed out with bold fingers to—"The many serious defects which have to be rectified, many just grievances of the people to be redressed, many instances of injustice and oppression which should be corrected, many scandals which have to be prevented." He concluded by adding—"I trust you will not neglect to give all that India wants, and which she has a *right* to demand from you." Thus, Dadabhai Naroji's dictum,—'Swaraj is our birth right', of 1905, was enunciated by Keshabchandra, as early as in 1870 !

**A Rare
Voice :
Never Heard**

How did England receive Keshabchandra ? Let its representative missionary, Rev J. E. Carpenter answer—

"Never again has England heard from the East a voice like this, a voice of such rare power and charm. The glow of faith in his face, his courage, his passionate sincerity, his realisation of the presence of God,—left in our hearts a clear impression of the supporting power of the Everlasting Love."

**Pratapchan-
dra the
Pilgrims'
Direct
Inspiration**

Pratapchandra was their second Pilgrim, who visited England four years later. The Prayer Meeting Pilgrims were blessed with a fairly long intimate contact with him and his life was a direct inspiration in their path of Pilgrimage. During his life of seventy-five years, he was a clear example

of how 'old-age is sanctified when supported by Prayer and Faith'. He left the shores of India on Pilgrimage four times, in 1874, 1883, 1893 and 1900,—and these were not confined to England alone, but covered a far wider area, extending over the whole world.

**Four Pilgrim-
ages Abroad
1874, 1883,
1893, 1900**

These were both intensive and comprehensive, mostly in response to invitations. In course of the tours, he kept himself fully occupied with delivering lectures, conducting Divine services, holding discourses on religious matters,—besides attending social functions and visiting places of interest.

During his first Pilgrimage to the West, his first preaching was in the famous 'Peter Dean's Church' and his first lecture was at the equally famous 'Society of Arts'. He preached from the different churches in England, every week. The two principal events however, were addresses before the 'Congress of Orientalists', in England, inaugurated by Prof. Max-muller, and the other before the annual meeting of the representatives of the Protestant Churches, in Germany. The addresses were highly appreciated. At Germany, his address was translated into German before the audience; but even though it did suffer from the usual handicap of losing the charm of the original, the whole audience stood up in appreciation, amidst thrilling cries of cheers—'Hoch'.

Pratapchandra was the first Indian Pilgrim to America, in 1883,—long ten years before Swami Vivekananda's first visit there. His spirit of Pilgrimage had its satisfaction as he could come in intimate contact with the famous personalities and institutions there. His famous work—'The Oriental Christ' was then published by Geo. H. Ellis of Boston. It produced sensation in the West and the book soon gained a wide popularity and made its author, well-known. His second visit to America in 1893, was as one of India's delegate to the historical 'World Parliament of Religion', held at Chicago. Rev. J. H. Barrows D. D. was the Chairman of the General Committee and was practically the soul of the Parliament. It took two years to get ready for the sitting and Pratapchandra had the distinction of being elected member of the Organising

**First Pilgrim
to America
1883**

**His Second
Visit :
Chicago
Parliament
of Religion
1893**

Committee and the Advisory Council. The spirit of the eminent Doctor of Divinity was worked up and strung in complete unison with the spirit of Pilgrimage of Pratapchandra. Surprisingly enough, Barrow's book on travels round the world, has been named by him as 'A Pilgrimage.' The subject of Pratapchandra's address was—'World's Religious Debts to Asia', but he had to deliver an extra address on 'The Brahmo Samaj,' on the third sitting. Besides these, he had to speak to the Parliament on two other occasions in response to greetings of welcome and farewell and lead the Universal Prayer one day.

**Lowell
Features**

After the sittings of the Parliament of Religion came to a close, he delivered a large number of lectures in different parts of America, the most famous amongs these was a series of four lectures (Lowell lectures, which are usually delivered by the best intellect of the year,—in science or philosophy or literature). Of this series of lectures, two were on 'Indian Religion and Spiritual life—Ancient and Modern' and the other two on the 'Races and Societies in India'.

His tour created a deep impression on the Western minds through new ideas coming from a true 'Interpreter of Religious Thoughts'. Just to have an idea of the striking impression left by Pratapchandra at the 'Parliament of Religion,' we rest satisfied with quoting very briefly from only two of the remarkable references of two eminent persons.

**Mighty
Spiritual
Up-lift**

Rev. J. T. Sunderland, the representative of the Unitarian Churches, wrote—"At the great Religious Parliament, Pratapchandra was listened to with greater and more continuous interest than any other speaker. Everybody felt the force of his eloquence, the depth and sincerity and the mighty spiritual up-lift of his utterances."

Samuel J. Barrows, the editor of the famous 'Christian Register', wrote in the report published in his paper,—"No voice commanded more attention of the Parliament of Religion than that of the member of the Brahmo Samaj. Upon no one in the Pentacostal gathering did the cloven tongue of fire more surely rest. Mr. Mozoomder seeks the blessedness of the peace-maker. He comes to speak of a reconciling

**Tongue of
Fire**

world. Mr. Mozoomder is really a missionary to the New World of a message alive with spiritual power." It will be remembered that according to Mr. Barrows, Pratapchandra's 'Heart-Beats' is the most remarkable devotional book, since Thamas-A-Kampis.

Nothing is however more eloquent about the deep impression left by Pratpchandra in the Parliament of Religion than the official report, (See Appendix A) edited by Rev. J. S. Barrows, the Chairman and the feeling letter from him to Pratapchandra, written a year after the sitting of the Parliament. The following are extracts from that —

**The Official
Report :
Chairman's
Feeling
Letter**

"...Yours beautiful and sympathetic words regarding our great sorrow have been thank-fully perused. Our dear boy is in better hands than ours, and though the tears fall upon his grave, we have learnt to rejoice that he has escaped the sorrow and struggle of this life, for the peace in Heaven."

"...One year ago you were speaking to us in the Parliament. I have been re-reading your words. I can not read without tears. I have much more that I might write, but I have said enough to indicate that you have a large place in our thoughts, affection and prayer. ...Cordially and faithfully I am, your friend and brother."

Pratapchandra was named by Keshabchandra and known to his Mandali as an 'Interpreter' of Nababidhan, (which it was their strong conviction, would surely one day unify all Religions). He affirmed his universal_un-sectarian principle of life (অসাম্প্রদায়িকতা ও সমদর্শন) in his book of Benediction or 'Ashis'—expressions of Gratitude, Prayer and Self-examination (কৃতজ্ঞতা, প্রার্থনা ও আত্মলোচনা) and tried to interpret all through his life, the higher teaching of all Religions (সকল ধর্ম শাস্ত্রের উচ্চশিক্ষা যথাসাধ্য ব্যাখ্যা). In his book, 'The Spirit of God', he has introduced himself as one with no pretension to be a philosopher, or theologian, or scholar, but at the same time he feels strongly that his transcendental experiences 'must be uttered'.

**The
Interpreter :
Truth of All
Religions**

Again in his *Ashis*, he describes his wandering life as an 'untiring Pilgrimage' (অবিশ্রান্ত তীর্থযাত্রা), which was an

**The Untiring
Pilgrimage**

‘inevitable necessity, a rest-less zeal’ and he could never ‘resist its relent-less urge.’ He regarded his mission tours as so many Pilgrimages, to adopt and assimilate the great spiritual ideals of others and every time he returned with heavenly wealth—‘multiplied unto myself and unto my people’.

The spirit of Pilgrimage was ever sustained by Pratap-chandra with great reverence, throughout his life. In his fourth and the last Western Pilgrimage (1900), his *Upashanas* revealed a great depth of thought and feeling with a marked emphasis on ‘Adoration’ (*Aradhana*) and ‘Meditation’ (*Dhyan*). These used to move his congregation so much, that an old venerable Pastor remarked that in the ‘Hush’ that prevailed during the *Upashana*, God’s presence was felt. On the last day of his voyage abroad, although comfortable on board the big ship ‘Egypt’, we find from his diary, that he feels tired, but immediately brushes it aside in the true spirit of a Pilgrim. He writes,—“Sometimes I think, at my age, it is not wise to throw myself so far out of my elements. But the Voice calls me, the Hand beckons me and follow I must,—even if it be to the Pilgrim’s death in the foreign land. I am going to my Father’s Western home and He goes with me. Therefore, courage my soul,—trust and do thy best.”

Member of
the World
Family

At the close of the tour, after a continuous travel for six weeks, even though accomodated in excellent rooms overlooking a beautiful park at Edinburgh, he feels sometimes tired and home-sick, but still writes with confidence to his friends at home—“But a wandering Pilgrim as I am, what home have I but the heart of God, where my access is growing easier every day. Last year, we had lots of nice time together, but now I am a citizen of the world and a member of the great family of Man-kind. My heart is broadened ; God is bountiful to me. —Indeed I need tender care and rest,—but there can be no more tender care than from His gentle hands and no rest but in Him.”

Yet, Love for
Home

Yet, the wandering Pilgrim loves his dear mother-land ! His last letter from abroad was a cry from the depth of his heart to the members of the Brahmo Samaj, when he wrote—“You are all the best hope and treasure that I have on earth ! I

have done the work entrusted to me—to deliver the message of the Interpreter. Peace fills my soul. The great Dispensation of the Providence will some day, be the Faith of man-kind. Blessed, for ever, be His name. Now from this land of wealth and strength, from this mighty people,—illustrious in war, prosperous in peace, expert in state-craft, I depart. I long for the humble mystics of the Brahmo Samaj. I long for my poor home. The sweet autumn leaves,—sad in parting, sob in gust and fall in showers here. But the blue skies there beacon me. Do you also invite me ?”

Pratapchandra recognises three distinct types of Pilgrimages. Besides the usual type noted above, the second type is—“In the holy land of my own nature. I cease to be earthly when I have been with the Spirit within myself. This meant growth of the spirit in constant search of new light from the Spirit.”*

**His Three
Types of
Pilgrimage**

In his Pilgrimage tours he sometimes felt tired, but soon feels rejuvenated and in his Diary we find—

“I need nursing and rest. But there is no better nursing in life than what devotional life furnishes—and the rest is in God”. He again writes,—“War and Peace ! The old war-horse still dances to the music of drum and fife and snorts for the battle-field, but soon feels the curbs of the bridle of Age. Are my battles really over ? So long as life lasts, its battles usually continue. I have retired from the noisy world. I would rather not get busied up with rivalries and worldly vanities. I would worship and contemplate and serve in quiet and peace. This is my only concern and it is only joy and sanctity !” This, he would like to be his new Pilgrimage.

In his last memorable Anniversary Town-Hall lecture (20th January, 1904) on—‘Zeal for Spiritual Life’, he thus

* In 1880 was enunciated the Faith of Nababidhan and Pilgrimage to all Prophets and Scriptures was one of the elementary principles. It took Pratapchandra two years of hard labour to bring out his comprehensive treatise on—‘The Faith and Principles of the Brahmo Samaj’ and in this, the significance of this type of Pilgrimage is given as—“Not by moving from place to place, travelling miles, does a man perform his Pilgrimage always. He is also a true Pilgrim, who travels in spirit and in the spirit land ; who seeks for the Promised Land within his heart,—where is the true *Brindaban* or the Kingdom of Heaven”.

aloft to spread its light across the seas. Pratapchandra regretted why this person was not coming forward ! He said—

“আমার জরা-দুর্বল হস্ত হইতে এ দীপ পড়িয়া যাইতেছে। একজন আছে যে এই দীপ সবল হস্তে বহন করিয়া, স্তূর সাগর পারের জীবনে আলোকপাত করিতে সক্ষম,—কিন্তু সে অগ্রসর হয় না কেন ?”

Pratapchandra was not in his mortal life, when Benoyendranath left the shores of India on his Pilgrimage, but the Rishi's soul must have been very happy,—pouring his blessings on Benoyendranath's venture.

At the close of the Pilgrimage, Benoyendranath brought out his journal of experience and engagements while in Europe and America, and he fondly and significantly named it—‘The Pilgrim’. This was published in England by Rev. Evans, Editor of the famous paper—‘The Christian Life’, who introduced Benoyendranath thus—‘To know Prof. B. N. Sen was to feel the impress of his wonderful sweetness of disposition and his serene spirituality. The secret of his success as an effective speaker was the Man—his words were lived.’

During his Pilgrimage, Benoyendranath had the opportunity of exchange of thoughts and ideas with many of the best minds and brains of the West. There he did not see things with his eyes and heard things with his ears only.—but his very soul went deep into everything. For instance, while charmed with the pretty, artistically laid-out Alps, he remembered the ‘wild grandeur’ of the mighty Himalayas, ‘which speaks so ceaselessly of a past, that communes with the Eternal that dwells in the mountains’.

To Benoyendranath, the visit to the wonderful Niagara Falls was also a real Pilgrimage. It was surely one of the glorious sights that nature could present—only next to the Himalayas. It signified to him, the genius and the soul of America. And he wondered—‘If the ceaseless rolling of waters meant rest or unrest, a senseless waste or the inexhaustible abundance and munificence ; whether the sound that they made, wanted to rouse to action or lull to sleep ; if the dance of the Rapids meant the writhings or wringlings of a tortured spirit, or indeed, the dance of a boundless joy’.

**The Pilgrim :
His Vexy
Soul Went
Deep**

**The Wonder-
ful Niagara
Falls Invite
to Pray**

But soon all these questionings stopped and in the midst of the maddening crowd of sight-seers and the deafening roars of the falls, Benoyendranath sat down to Pray and 'rapt in wonders, worshipped the Invisible, alone'.

**The Nigras :
A Place for
Prayer**

At an American University, he was struck with the wonderful singing of their National Anthem, by thousands of students, in chorus with one heart and with the same spirit of love of freedom. This thrill on him (*রোমহর্ষ*) unfolded in his mind a new vision of the *Biswarup* of the Gita, as the very image of the universe in Sree Krishna. It was a fresh revelation of the Humanism of modern times, in all its splendour and glory, depth and infinitude, in every soul. This aspect of immanence of *Biswarup* was brightly illuminated in Benoyendranath's subsequent famous lectures on the Gita.

**The Thrill :
Biswarup
Darsan &
Humanity**

The spirit in which Benoyendranath went on his Western Pilgrimage has been beautifully expressed by himself in the following 'introduction' to his 'Pilgrim' Journal.—

"Will the East and the West ever understand each other ? Will Europe and America ever understand India ? Never, except on the sanctified heights of thought and life and character. Not without much cost must the ascent to those heights be made by each ; nay, not without much conflict even, and the impact,—long and hard. Most strenuous must be the struggle, before India—i.e. millions of her people—can realise what her soul is. Then alone will she know what to live for and what to die for."

**The East &
the West**

"In this process, others can and will help her, as much by positive assistance as by positive, deep, and radical contradiction. Let her be thankful to the West, for giving her a-new the idea of a common soul and a common destiny for the millions,—the people. Is it not a law of the expansion of its own inner life that the West should say to the East,—'Live and know thyself, and glorify God with me,' as it is the mission of the East to say to the West—'Live in order that thou mayest love God and find peace'. Verily, verily, it is true to both of them, that they can neither live nor fulfil the law of

**Unite
Through
Prayer**

their Being, till they have learnt to Pray together—Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done.”

What a great seer's eyes opened up for Benoyendranath, as a result of his Western Pilgrimage ! What a wide vista, what a bright vision, what an eloquent, true prediction about our country's future destiny,—quite half a century ago ! What a bold contradiction to Kipling's hasty remark—‘East and West, the Twain shall ne'er meet’ !”

Rev. C. F. Andrews never met Benoyendranath, but had the highest regard for the latter's Pilgrim spirit. The idea about this, he gathered from the latter's writings, which gave expressions to living realities and from the appreciative remarks from his friends. When Principal J. Carpenter of Manchester College, Oxford, spoke to him so highly about Benoyendranath's remarkable life—‘his spirituality, his moral earnestness and pure simplicity’, Rev. Andrews felt an instinctive and immediate spiritual kin-ship with this his unknown friend—‘a friend whom having not seen, he loved’. He looked upon Benoyendranath as a true Pilgrim Peace-Maker, with an unassuming understanding love. This is Rev. Andrew's apt analysis of this aspect of Benoyendranath's character, that appealed to him most—

**Rev. Andrews
& the Pilgrim
Peace-maker:
He Knows us**

“On one side, is the deep outshining love for India, its spiritual treasures, as represented and embodied in her wonderful history and philosophy, which enabled Benoyendranath to interpret the Truths so strongly and clearly,—yet with humility and a simplicity of faith. On the other hand, he understood the true greatness of the West, which lay not only in its Industry and Science, but true service to all Nobility,—the message of the ‘Cross’. In short, he seemed to know us.”

“In the great humanity of the future, when the East and the West shall be united in religious fellow-ship, Benoyendranath's name will have its place among the Peace-makers, whom God calls as His own children. It is our part now to cherish the lessons that he taught, both by words and examples. Blessed are the Peace-makers, for they are the sons of God’ !”

Benoyendranath's Pilgrimage to the West resulted in polishing up his intrinsic and intensive spirit of Universality and Harmony, as enunciated by Ram Mohan Roy and preached by Keshabchandra. After his return from the West, Benoyendranath gave expression to his thoughts in an Article—'Freedom of Thought in the Present Age', in which he said that developments of Ideas of different freedom movements did not confine themselves to water-tight compartments. The thoughts did not belong to the West or to the East exclusively and they are not the monopoly of any particular nation, but they marked their march of progress in self-realisation, in the present age. The manuscript was sent to Rabindranath for publication in the new series of 'Bangadarshan'. The Article found response in the Poet's mind and he wrote back, thus—

Returns a
Polished
Universality

বিনয় সম্ভাষণ পূর্বক নিবেদন—

আমি বঙ্গদর্শনের সম্পাদক-পদ পরিত্যাগ করিয়াছি। আমি শৈলেশকে বলিয়াছি প্রবন্ধটী বিশেষ সমাদর-যোগ্য হইয়াছে এবং আমার মতের সহিত কোনও অনৈক্য নাই। আমি বিরোধ ও বিদ্বেষ পরবশ জাতীয় ভাবের পক্ষপাতী নই—আমি বিধাতার নির্দিষ্ট স্বাভাবিক অধিকার ও অমুরাগমূলক জাতীয়তাবাদের সমর্থন করিয়া থাকি। প্রত্যেক জাতির বিশেষত্ব সমস্ত মানবের সম্পত্তি।...যদি স্বদেশ-পক্ষপাতের প্রতি বেশী ঝোঁক দিয়া কিছু লিখিয়া থাকি, তবে এই স্বাভাবিক মমত্ব-বোধের অপরাধ মার্জনা করিবেন—কিন্তু বিদেশ-বিদ্বেষকে আমি শ্রেয়স্কর বলিয়া জ্ঞান করি না...ইতি—১৫ই জ্যৈষ্ঠ, ১৩১৩।

ভবদীয়—

শ্রীরবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর।

At this time, Rabindranath came to Benoyendranath at his Mechuaabazar residence. The occasion was duly taken advantage of by the Prayer Meeting Band, who were present at the meeting. Some eminent men, like Dr. Brajendra Nath Seal, Principal Heramba Chandra Maitra and others were also present. The Poet delighted the gathering with two of his then new songs—'I will feel Thy presence in whomsoever I

meet, wherever I go' and then, 'Whomsoever Thou presentest Thine banner,—let him have strength to uphold it.' These indeed were Prayers from the heart of a Pilgrim !

Benoyendranath went to the West as a Pilgrim and came back to his country a better and wiser Pilgrim. After his return, he went to Puri for a few days, on the invitation of his 'relative-friend', who was spending his holidays there. Standing on the sea-beach, he lost himself in wonder and only woke up as if were from a deep slumber, and softly said,—“What a great experience of spiritual life it is, when one's spirit finds and for the time-being lives and moves, in the Supreme Spirit, in its dance of *Leela*, or playful, fresh spontaneous and full self-revelation of the Supreme Beatitude of the universal soul,—the *Sachidananda Hare*. In the dance of the moon-light over the ripples on the bosom of the infinite sea, the soul often forgets itself and its embodiment in flesh, confined in space and time in the physical frame and loses its identity in the process. The beach at Puri is thus a real place of Pilgrimage, where the finite can, with ease merge into the Infinite. This was how the life of Sree Chaitanya ended. Beneyendranath also remarked that the sea-beaches he had seen elsewhere had never presented such a sight of wide stretch and expanse, that brings one closer to the Infinite,—the Satyam, Sivam, Sundaram ?

Prayer means life of Faith and it is the inspiration for all Pilgrimages. Prayer stands at the head of cultivation of all our faculties and grows in strength through union of hearts offering the Prayers. It grows in and through many and all, to build up a life of One-ness and Harmony. Prayer lives in all as all, and brings All into one focus. Such was Prayer to the Pilgrims of the 'Young Men's Prayer Meeting'. The Youngmen of yesterday are the Elders of the day and with their blessings and prayers, may the Youngmen of the present age form themselves into new Prayer Meeting Band, to take up the places of those that have gone before, on their Eternal Pilgrimage ! In the Quest for Unity in Diversity in the Perpetual Light, may they pursue the path of 'Pilgrimage through Prayer' !

**Pilgrim
Returns
Wiser**

**Sea at Puri :
Its—Strong
Appeal**

**Welcome
to New
Pilgrims
Through
Prayers**

APPENDIX 'A'.

Extracts from the Official Report of the Chicago
Parliament of Religion.

• In dark,—almost ascetic garb, there sat among his fellow-orientals, Protap Chander Mozoomdar. Mr. Mozoomdar, the leader of the Brahmo Samaj, visited this country ten years ago, and delighted large audiences with his eloquence and perfect command of the English tongue.

**Pratapchan-
dra of Past
Glory**

* * *

After the Inauguration of the Parliament, Responses to the addresses of welcome were uttered first by the most Rev. Dionysios Lates, Archbishop of Zante, (Greece.) After him, spoke P. C. Mazoomdar of Calcutta, India, already known to many in the assembly, both personally, as author of "The Oriental Christ", and also as representative of the Brahmo Samaj,—the movement towards a pure spiritual Theism, on which high hopes of many hearts have been fixed, in many lands. On rising, he was loudly cheered.

**Second
Speaker at
Inaugura-
tion : Loudly
Cheered.**

* * *

The morning session of the third day was presided over by the Chairman, Dr. Barrows, and began as on the previous days, with an act of silent devotion, and with the reciting of the 'Universal Prayer', led by Mr. Mozoomdar.

The first paper of the morning by P. C. Mozoomdar of Calcutta, had been looked forward to, with exceptional interest, because of the author personally and because of what he represented. And when the successor of Ram Mohon Roy and of Keshab Chunder Sen came forward to speak of the Brahmo Samaj, he was greeted with loud applause.

**Loads
Universal
Prayer :
First Paper
on Third
Day :**

At the conclusion of this address, the multitude rose to their feet and led by Theodore F. Seward, sang the hymn, "Nearer, my God, to Thee".

* * *

At the morning session of this very memorable day (Sixth), great feeling was aroused by a telegram from the Brahmo Samaj of Calcutta, sending its benediction and good-

**Memorable
Sixth Day :
India &
America
Same in the
Spirit of
God.**

will to the Parliament. There were resounding cheers from the audience. Mr. Mozoomdar arose and said : "It delights my heart to see the spontaneous response to the message, which my fellow-believers have sent this vast distance. I feel now, more than I have ever felt, that India and America are as one in the Spirit of the God of all nations".

The Speaker sat down, overcome with emotion.

* * *

**Most Dense
Crowd Greets
his Main
Address**

On this day, the crowds in the Hall of Columbus were if possible, more dense than on any previous day. If the public had got the impression that the proceedings were to be of very great interest and practical value, they were not destined to be disappointed. The address was on—"The World's Religious Debt to Asia", by P. C. Mozoomdar of the Brahmo Samaj.

* * *

**His Fare-well
Address : the
Voice of
India**

After Dr. Momerie's address in the Hall of Columbus, the Chairman called upon P. C. Mozoomdar of the Brahmo Samaj, to deliver the Fare-well Address. When he finished, the Chairman, Dr. Barrows said,—“We have heard the voice from India ! ”

—————

APPENDIX 'B'.

Benoyendranath's Pilgrimage to the West.

(Based on his Journal—'The Pilgrim'.)

As delegate of the Brahmō Samaj to 'The International Conference of the Unitarian and other Liberal Religious Thinkers and Workers' at Geneva, Benoyendranath started from Calcutta on 3rd August, 1905, and reached Bombay on the 5th August. On the next day, he delivered a lecture on—'Religion and Modern India', at the Prarthana Samaj. He left Bombay on the 7th, by S. S. Nippon. On board the ship, while remembering the dear ones left behind, the memory of Rishi Protapchandra filled up his heart and in the first letter home, the first thing he wrote was a request to his wife Sakuntala Debi, to visit the Peace-Cottage regularly and make enquiries about Saudamini Debi. Such was Benoyendranath's deep regard for Pratapchandra.

Reaches
Bombay-5th
Aug. 1905 :
Leaves-7th

Benoyendranath was a strict vegetarian from his early boy-hood. This of course proved to be a handicap for him in the western lands. But his loving nature and genial temperament drew the special care and attention from his hosts—from the steward of the ship to the people in charge of university professor's house-hold, where he was usually berthed or even the managers of the first-rate hotels where he was put up. They all tried to cater to him as best as possible but they had mostly to depend only on milk, bread, butter, jams, potatoes, biscuits and 'Indian biscuits' (*muri*).

A Vegetarian
taken Good
Care of

At Geneva, Prof. Manstal, the president, jokingly remarked—"Prof. Sen, I am afraid, by the charm you spread over us,—you will turn all of us on the table into vegetarians". Prof. Hammet of Meadville, aged ninety, invited Benoyendranath to dinner at his villa and prepared the special dishes himself. At Toronto, Dr. Sunderland's wife was away when Benoyendranath was his guest and his earnest request to Benoyendranath was, to come again when the good wife would be there, to taste her delicious vegetable dishes that would be prepared for him,—if not for anything else. As

Affection
Makes Good
Lost Delicacy

it was, the break-fast prepared by Dr. Sunderland was good enough and the cordial way it was offered was more pleasing. Prof. Christie, the greatest authority on Church-history and History of Doctrines, invited Benoyendranath to his solitary den and told—"If only I had a dinner-table, I would have asked you then what dishes you would like to have. As it is, —I am afraid you will not be sufficiently nourished by my food". Such was the deep affection of the kindly souls for their dear guest.

After attending the Geneva conference, Benoyendranath continued his pilgrimage to other parts of the continent and then to England and America. In all these places he had the opportunity of meeting many great men of that time. He delivered a large number of lectures, held discourses and conducted many divine services with inspiring sermons, from the pulpits of the Unitarian churches.

In all these, Benoyendranath came out as a man of great faith, with knowledge of a wide range, a philosophical grasp and deep insight. He endeared himself to all. It is further interesting to note that the Indian would be so liked there for his 'Beautiful English', apart from everything else. Mrs. Spore, the English wife of the famous American Professor, sitting by the side of Benoyendranath at dinner table, remarked—"I am delighted to hear such beautiful English. What dreadful English these Americans speak"! Others present at the table admired the brilliance of the lecture that evening. Dr. Minot Savages, the Unitarian minister of New York, who has fondly named his church as—"The Church of the Messiah", and had the distinction of being entrusted with the Sunday Service at the Calvin Cathedral, at the time of the Geneva conference, exclaimed to Benoyendranath—"How beautiful your English is!" Whenever Benoyendranath hesitated to accept lecturing engagements on short notice, having no time to prepare them, people insisted on hearing him and said—"Oh! you dont require any preparation at all. You do it much better even without it, than we ever can".

When Benoyendranath over-stayed at America because of heavy engagements, Prof Evans, the editor of the famous

**An Indian &
his Beautiful
English.**

'The Christian Life', wrote to Benoyendranath—"Please be sure to ask our dear American cousins not to detain you too long. I know they are a little greedy, but tell them please, that your English brethren on this side of the Atlantic are impatiently awaiting to welcome you amongst them once again." At the grand Reception to him at the Harvard University, the sentiments expressed by the speakers, particularly by its great Philosopher, Prof. James of world-wide fame, were extremely cordial. About this, Benoyendranath himself felt thus—"But there were none whose enthusiasm touched me more than that of Prof. James. He took me to his house after the meeting, and was loth to part with me, though it was getting far into the night. I flatter myself, that I had touched some hidden chord of his soul".

**Feeling
References**

At the Banquet given in Benoyendranath's honour, at the 'Philosophical Society' at Toronto, the proposer of the Toast referred to Benoyendranath's sermon as—"the finest I have ever heard". Another striking reference to him was—"The Prophets are not dead ! There is one with us to-night, here". And when Prof. Southworth, the president of the American Unitarians said—"Prof. Sen, we have been sitting at your feet",—it struck Benoyendranath dumb and the stirrings of the heart brought tears to his eyes.

**Toast Brings
Tears**

Benoyendranath endeared himself to all, wherever he went and a feeling of void was felt when he left. The reaction to his numerous presents of messages there and impression that Benoyendranath left, can be summed up in the following reference by Sir Debaprasad Sarbadhikary, the Vice-Chancellor of the University, who visited England a few years afterwards, in his 'In Memoriam'—

"And Benoyendranath is fondly remembered, where-ever he went. Many of his English friends whom I came across, had very little to talk to me about, excepting Benoyendranath. And their uniform request to me was—"send us some more personages like him".*

**Fond Remem-
brances :
Requests for
More Like
Him.**

* Sir Debaprasad then sighs—

"Oh, where are we to find them, alas ! And, 'Oh ! Where ?'— the deepening echo answers."

At Geneva, Benoyendranath received a warm welcome. But he did not feel very happy about the Conference. Its name was quite a mouth-ful, but very few from outside Europe attended, and the subjects discussed were confined mostly to the various problems of Christianity and that too 'without its Cross',—losing its deeper significance and being more concerned about the outer form only. It might be noted that Pratapchandra warned the founders, of whom he was one, about the risk of the Conference losing its liberalism and assuming a narrow-minded parochial form, if they were not careful. Pratapchandra's predicament came only too true. The Geneva Conference did not compare very favourably with the more enthusiastic Conferences Benoyendranath attended at America. But his paper for the Conference on—'The Problem of Religion in Modern India', was highly appreciated.

**The Geneva
Conference.**

To Benoyendranath,—“The solutions of the problem of Religion in the modern times in its theological, philosophical and spiritual aspects, as well as in its practical bearing, is really through the understanding of the East by the West, and vice-versa. The living men of the East and of the West have still to meet and recognise each other, and not with a spirit breathed only from the distant past. Liberal Religion of the West cannot forget or lay aside the Cross,—as in the East, it cannot forget the In-dwelling Spirit, the *Parmatman*, the breath of the soul : It is the spirits of the Cross and of Communion that are the reconciler and solvent between the sturdy forces of individualism and materialism in politics, in industry, in commerce, on the one hand and the deep aspirations and softness and graces of life, on the other”.

**Liberal
Religion :
Cross of
West &
Communion
of East.**

Having been invited by President Southworth of the Meadville Theological College, to attend the 'National Conference of American Unitarians' in the Atlantic City, from the 2nd September, and also the opening of the sessions at Meadville after that,—Benoyendranath could not afford to stay long in the Continent or in England. On his way to America, he could just have a glimpse of the beauties of Switzerland,—but that was sufficient to re-awaken his reverence for the wild grandeurs of the Himalayas and he felt—“With

**Reverence
for Hima-
layas Re-
awakened.**

all thy wildness, oh Himalaya, only thou speak so ceaselessly of a past, that lived in communion with the spirit of the Eternal that dwells in the mountain". He spent only two days at Paris—the beautiful city of enchantment, and then ten days in London. At Paris, his artist's mind enjoyed fully the treasures of the Louvre Art Gallery and the Versailles Palace. In London, he delivered several sermons from the Unitarian pulpits and held some discourses on Theological subjects and in spare time, visited the famous sites—The West Minster Abbey, The Houses of Parliament, the Tate gallery, etc.

**Paris &
London.**

At the Atlantic City, he had a very cordial welcome and Benoyendranath was also deeply impressed with the strength and freshness of life that he found around him. Though not in the programme, special accommodation was made for his speech on the very opening day of the Conference. A strong kinship was felt between the spirit of the Unitarians and the Brahmo Samaj, as the mission of both was to forget all narrowness and rise above sectarianism, to lift up high the ideal Faith of the future. "Happy, happy America : she can afford to breathe freely the pure air of transcendentalism !" —Thus felt Benoyendranath. Mr. Bachelor, the famous editor of the "Christian Register" presided, and Benoyendranath's speech had the distinction of being published in his paper, the next morning.

**The Atlantic
City.**

From the busy Atlantic City, Benoyendranath went to the quiet place Meadville, a place of hallowed memories of Dr. Carey of the Sreerampur Mission and Bishop Thoburn of Calcutta. This is the place where an annual scholarship of £ 100, tenable for two years, has been founded for Theological studies there of Brahmo students, by President Southworth. Benoyendranath was kept very busy conducting Divine services in the Unitarian churches, speaking to the Ladies Club, the Sunday School for the young, the Young People's Association and the Literary Union. Besides these, he delivered a series of four lectures before big appreciative gatherings, in the University. The four subjects were—'Relation of Theology to Religion', 'The Idea of God', 'The Ideal of life' and 'Salvation and Immortality'. The

**Meadville
Theological
College :
Adin-Ballon
Foundation
Oration.**

'Adin-Ballon Foundation Oration' for that year was also delivered by him, the subject being a complicated one—'The Hindu Sociology'.

**Pittsburg :
City of
Biggest
Things.**

From Meadville, Benoyendranath went to Pittsburgh, the 'City of blazing furnace',—the City where the great Andrew Carnegie made his millions to establish various munificent Trusts and numerous Endowments for the benefit of humanity. He preached before a large gathering in the church. The congregation felt so enthusiastic over what they heard about the Brahmo Samaj, that at their earnest request, he had to conduct repeat service in the evening also,—the sermon being on the same subject. He visited the Technical Institute, the Art Gallery, the Museum and the Library and also one Mill—all of the biggest type in the world. It was however the wonderful huge Carnegie Library that impressed him most and he had to deliver a lecture there.

**The Carnegie
Library &
the Old
'Walking
Libraries'**

He told them how the Hindu scholars and Buddhist monks of India's olden times, used to carry their big scripture books in their memory for generations and he described them as so many versatile 'Walking Libraries'. The lecture so interested the audience that Benoyendranath, after he had finished his speech, had at their earnest and persistent request, to rise again and continue to speak,—this time the subject was 'Buddhism'.

The Library was a huge one, and Benoyendranath was dead tired by the time he had gone round barely one third of it, in three long hours. Dr Hopkins, the Director of the Library was himself the guide, all through.

**Philosopher
Charms
Technicians**

During his visit to the Carnegie College of Technology, the biggest of its kind in the world, on the insistence of its Director Dr. Hammerschlag, Benoyendranath had to address the students there too,—a philosopher made to speak to technical students! The subject chosen, without any previous notice, was—'The Relation between Utility and Beauty in Art', and it proved indeed very fascinating and impressive. The Director was so charmed with the speech, that he declared a Scholarship for one of Benoyendranath's students, for study in the college.

His next move was to Buffalo. From there, he was taken to the great Niagra Falls by Mr. Brown, the Unitarian Minister. The Niagra Falls to Benoyendranath, was—"Not a splendour and beauty that simply appeals to the eyes and the ear, but is also satisfying to the soul". In the midst of the maddening crowd of mere sight-seers, he wished to be in a quiet atmosphere and in prayer-fulspirit—either alone or with his companions of the Prayer Meeting. The poetical words in which Benoyendranath described the Falls to Dr. Sunderland afterwards, was ever remembered by him and quoted in his 'In Memoriam'.—"The emotions of sublimity, awe and worship had all been awakened simultaneously in the soul, by its contact with that wonderful manifestation of nature's power and grandeur".

**Buffalo for
the Niagra
Falls
Pilgrimage.**

From Buffalo, Benoyendranath went to Toronto and Montreal for a week. He was kept very busy, with preaching and lecturing every day. On one Sunday, he had to preach both morning and evening at two churches, about twenty miles apart from each other. His old friend Rev. Sunderland, a leader of the Unitarian Church, was at Toronto, to welcome Benoyendranath and his cordiality just reciprocated what he received from the latter at Calcutta, ten years earlier. Benoyendranath received probably the best appreciation at this place. He delivered two fine lectures, one on,—'The Present-day Current in Religious Thoughts in India', at the Philosophical Club, and the other on,—'India and the Brahmo Samaj', at the Unitarian Club

**Toronto :
Heats Old
Friend
Sunderland**

Dr. Abbot and Dr. Hume, the famous Professors of Philosophy were so deeply impressed that after the speech, they enthusiastically proposed an inter-change of Professors between the Calcutta and the Canadian Universities, to develop deeper understanding between the two countries and enable them to be "Benefited by hearing from men like Professor Sen".

**Interchange
of Professors
Benefit of
Hearing
Men like
Prof Sen**

Dr. Sunderland's impression of the Philosophical Club lecture as described in his "In Memoriam" was unique—"The attendance was large. It was the freely expressed judgment of practically all present, that the speech was the most

**Most Illuminating
Speech Ever
Heard in the
University.**

illuminating and profound. *It was one of the most masterly expressions of philosophical and religious insight and experience, that the University had ever known.* A strong desire was expressed to invite him to give further addresses, but his engagements elsewhere would not permit it". The visit to Toronto was a memorable Pilgrimage, as it provided the great pleasure and privilege of an intimate association with the venerable old Mr. Goldwin Smith,—verging on ninety, at a lunch and after-lunch talks.

**Boston of
Sanctified
Memories
& Glorious
Past :
Concord.**

The next destination was Boston,—the place sanctified by the memories of Emerson, Channings, Theodore Parker, Longfellow, Hawthorne and Lowell. A full fortnight was dedicated to the place, including its suburbs. With fond memories of 'Bhuloo-Naloos' Concord Club and their Concord Journal, he undertook his Pilgrimage to Concord,—the place of salient associations of the glorious past of the great American War of Independence.

**Minute
Man :
My Garden
& Sleepy
Hollow.**

To Benoyendranath, it was not mere America—but the land of the gods (*Deba-bhumi*) with the statue of the 'Minute Man'. It was the place, where the quiet saintly life of Emerson was spent in his 'My garden', and the site of his eternal sleep—the 'Sleepy Hollow', marked by the simple unchiselled piece of rock as the tomb. Mrs. Keys, the local minister and Miss Emerson, the Rishi Emerson's daughter, showed him round the places. And what a thrill it was for Benoyendranath, when told by Miss Emerson, that—"Things are exactly in the same order in which they were, when Emerson died". In Emerson's study, he found, among other books,—The works of Carlyle, The Puranas, The Manu-Samhita and a volume of Hafiz ! In that serene sombre atmosphere, Benoyendranath felt the presence of the great soul, as he used to feel that of the one at Kamal Kutir, whenever he visited it.

His Ministrations and lectures also kept him very busy, the important ones being the one on—'The Principles and Organisations of the Brahmo Samaj', before the Cambridge Association of Ministers and the other on—'The Problems of India in the Twentieth Century', in Twentieth Century

Club. At Boston, Benoyendranath had the privilege of sitting by the side of Mark Twain, at a luncheon party.

The visit to the Harvard University was another great Pilgrimage for Benoyendranath. Dr. J. H. Woods, the professor of Hindu Philosophy was Benoyendranath's friendly guide and introduced the latter to his colleagues. He first invited Benoyendranath to his own class—his subject that day being on 'Descartes'. He finished up early and then requested Benoyendranath to tell them something on the subject. And Benoyendranath obliged him with a highly illuminating lecture,—without any preparation whatsoever. The rich language, the flowing style, the depth of thought in that short lecture, charmed everybody, Dr. Woods looked at him in amazement and years after, when he met another Calcutta Professor there, observed :—"Men like Prof. Sen should be sent here oftener on lecturing tours, to enable America to have a true picture of Indian Culture". Benoyendranath was then taken to the class of Prof. William James, who was pulverising 'Monism', by his cudgel of 'Pluralism' and was having humorous flings at the "Philosophy of the Absolute" or Hegelism and its exponents, specially at his friend and teacher Prof. Royce, who in the next room was cutting to pieces Prof. James's Pragmatism, with his sharp-edged arguments for Monism.

On the same evening, Benoyendranath spoke at the Divinity Hall, before a big gathering—including Prof. Royce, Prof. James, Prof. Fenn, Prof. Woods and other distinguished men—the subject being—'God, Nature and the Soul in Hindu Philosophy'. This was the hall, where Emerson delivered his memorable Addresses! The remembrance brought a thrill, when Benoyendranath rose to speak. The lecture was very warmly appreciated. A distinguished Japanese professor who came to the University, on invitation, was so impressed that he extended to Benoyendranath a cordial invitation to Japan. But the most surprising reaction of the speech was on Prof. James, who had been rather indifferent to Benoyendranath in the morning,—taking him for a confirmed Indian Monist. His attitude now underwent a complete change after

**Harvard &
Its Philoso-
phers**

**Divinity
Hall :
Memories
Inspire**

the speech and he dragged Benoyendranath to his house and there they had a few interesting hours together, completely oblivious of the time.

The Pilgrim's next journey was to Northampton in Massachusetts,—the place of hallowed memory of Jonathan Edwards, considered by the great Principal Fairbairn of Oxford, as 'The greatest among the American thinkers and the highest speculative philosophical genius of the eighteenth century, in a far higher degree than even Spinoza—a God-intoxicated man. This was of great interest, as Benoyendranath was his ardent admirer. He took the earliest opportunity of visiting the Jonathans Memorial and pay his respectful homage. The Smiths College at Northampton,—an institution entirely for ladies, interested him very much. The sight of one thousand girl-students, singing their National Song and praying together before going to their respective classes, touched his heart and he ever remembered the glorious scene and spoke of the thrill felt—the *Roma-Harsha*, in his Gita class, while dwelling on the chapter on *Biswarup Darsan*—vision of God resplendent, embodying the whole Universe in Him. What a sad contrast is the singing in an unimpressive way of our National Anthems, (which is by far the best literary masterpiece of its kind in the world) in our gatherings, where usually one or barely a dozen persons sing, with eyes and minds of both of the singers and of those who are expected to join them, wantonly strolling about ! There were two lectures before the ladies, one on—'India, her Literature, her Social Life, her Ideal of Woman-hood', and the other on—'The Modern System of Education'. These comprehensive subjects were dealt with in a lucid way and awakened their interest in India, so much so, that the subject for their study-circles for that year, was 'India'.

That was the close of Benoyendranath's Pilgrimage in America. He left America and reached England on the 29th November, 1905. Mr. Bowes was in charge of arrangements for his programme, which was a crowded one. On every Sunday, he had to preach often at one church or another, even,—two both in the morning and in the evening. In

Northampton:
Jonathan
Memorial
National
Song &
Prayers
Thrill

London he was the guest of Mr. Evans. He attended the services both in the Westminster Abbey and the St. Paul's Cathedral. It was winter in England and London, with its smog and drizzles, appeared to be a very depressing, backward place. But, when Mrs. Evans welcomed Benoyendranath at her South-End house, with her smiling face and her sweet words—"So, Back Home Again!"—all the feeling of languor, and depression was removed. For three weeks, he was in the midst of the intellectual and cultural atmosphere at Oxford. There he was the guest of Principal Carpentier and delivered a few lectures and himself attended some very fine ones. In order to thoroughly understand Oxford, he had to cancel several engagements elsewhere. He also gave up the idea of a continental tour, as winter was not a suitable season for it. Moreover, he wanted to be back home, as soon as possible.

**Back to
England :
Understands
Oxford.**

When Benoyendranath was away on his Western Pilgrimage, there was a great agitation and political upheaval in the home-country, as a result of the 'Partition of Bengal'. The section of students, who had begun to think for themselves, were left in a hesitant mood,—finding it difficult to decide on the course of action to be taken up by them. They felt the absence of Benoyendranath very keenly and badly missed his wise counsel. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, who was then one of his dear students, made a frantic appeal to him, for his help-ful advice, to 'steady and cheer them'. His 'relative-friend' and his sister Sarala Debi, also informed him about the happenings in the country and wished to know his reactions about boycotting British Goods and putting these on fire. Benoyendranath felt disturbed in his mind and was anxious to be in their midst, during those days of troubles.

**Home Land
Calls.**

**Frantic
Appeal from
Rajendra
Prasad**

He left England on 26th February, took the Austrian Lloyd Boat on the 3rd March from Venice and reached India on 22nd March, 1906. The mere statements of certain incidents during the tour, will not be a true description of Pilgrimage. Its real significance and intrinsic worth can be assessed, only in the same spirit in which it has been done by

Dr. J. T. Sunderland, the representative of the Unitarian Church—

**Spirit & Life :
Best Gift of
Pilgrim.**

“Even more valuable than any products of his, were his character, his personality, his ideas and ideals,—his spirit and his life”.

* * * * *

Pilgrim's Messages.

“Long has the Pilgrim been under a promise to deliver fresh messages. Day after day, has seen the execution of that promise, put off. Since his return home, there has been lurking before his eyes, writ glaringly large on the face of the heavens, a big interrogatory,—mystic, inscrutable, like a comet. He stands to-day, under the sky, in the bosom of the eternal, with a freer, deeper love for all,—than he could have ever felt before.

**Why Speech-
es Unless
from Fullness
of Joy ?**

Around him a deep loneliness ! In the silent recesses, the face, of the shining ones,—smiling through their agonies !! Would that he might sink into an everlasting silence, unto all the beloved ones, whose companionship life's long and wide Pilgrimages has blessed him with. All cry with one full-souled breath—‘God be with ye’ ! Speech, speech !—why should a man speak ? Unless, the voice comes out of the fulness of Joy,—which is even like unto the speech of God Himself,—a creation, the efflorescence of Bliss !

**Speak Thou
Must—O,
Pilgrim of
Faith &
Prayer !**

Yet, what is it that says unto one,—‘Woe unto thee—if thou speakest not ! If the breath within thee be God-given,—speak, speak with thy full breath. Speak of God, speak of the sanctities and beatitudes of Life—its trusts and obligations, its burdens and responsibilities. There are many to hear some clear voice that will take them out of the mist within, in which they are groping. There are those that have loved thee,—yea, even thee ! Speak, speak ! if but to tell them thou too lovest, and shall not cease to love,—even when thy Pilgrimage takes thee into the end-less deep !

The Pilgrim bows his head down—and replies—“Lord ! let Thy servant obey.”—*From the “ Life of Benoyendranath”.*

Pramatha Lal Sen

Pramatha Lal Sen

Pramathalal,—the dear 'Nalooda' of the Nababidhan Brahmo Samaj, was born in Calcutta, on 17th December 1866. His father, Nabin Chandra Sen, was the elder brother of Brahmananda Keshab Chandra Sen. At the age of twentythree he lost his father and was only seventeen when Keshabchandra died. He had his education in the Albert School and College, founded by Brahmananda Keshabchandra and later left in charge of his younger brother Krishna Behari Sen, as its Rector. Pramathalal was the best boy of his class and used to carry off the first prize every year. He was all health and joy as a boy and took active interest in sports and games. He passed his Entrance Examination in the First Division and completed the course of First Arts (now the Intermediate). The death of his great uncle, who was the prime inspiration in his life came to him as a shock, which brought about a mighty transformation in his outlook and a complete change in his life. He did not appear in the University Examination and left his academic career. This enabled him to enjoy a larger freedom in his studies and the choice of subjects suited to the proper training for the mission of his life as a Priest and Pastor of the Nababidhan.

Family

Early Life
and Educa-
tion.

Leaves
University

Larger Free
dom in
Studies

His studies, from now on, were of the nature of Pilgrimages,—devotional exercises with prayers and communion with the Spirit. And the test of communion was a new regenerate life,—with a new vision, a new understanding, a new taste and a new heart. Every light of the spiritual world that came to him, he assimilated in a spirit of intense devotion; and this was a passion with him all his life. In this spirit he had been always carrying on his studies,—both oriental and occidental, even from early days.

Studies : A
Pilgrimage :
Assimila-
tion

This enthusiasm was now intensified. He gathered

Sacred
Books of
the East :
New Scrip-
tures

philosophical insight not from exclusively philosophical treatises, but mainly from the general literature on high thoughts with religious background. He did not read anything which was not a new scripture to him. He went deep into the Sacred Books of the East,—the Mahabharat being his special favourite, and in his studies of the Western literature, he was a devoted student of the Holy Bible and the Bible flowed into his being to inspire and develop his spiritual make-up.

Christ in a
New Light

To Keshabchandra and Pratapchandra, Christ appeared in a new light and this characteristic pictures of Christ had a strong appeal for both. As early as 1866, Keshabchandra delivered his memorable lecture on "Jesus Christ—Europe and Asia" and in his life held quite a number of discourses and seminars on Christ and Christianity. To these, in the later period Pramathalal with his friends* accompanied his brother Nandalal. The Band was all-enthusiasm over these and Pramathalal's love for the Bible started then : Keshabchandra's second memorable lecture on Christ,—'India Asks : Who is Christ ?' and subsequently Pratapchandra's 'Oriental Christ' (which highly pleased his friend Keshabchandra) and 'The Spirit of God' had created a deep impression on his mind and the love for the Bible became an infatuation. The poetry of the Biblical prose texts showered from his lips. To him, Christ's life itself was a beautiful poetry. He also studied in a spirit of deep devotion, the lives of Christian saints. The Catholic ideal of discipline captured his mind and thought. And who ever honoured freedom and had a regard for man, more than he ? The Protestant Movement, with the exception of the Quaker, the Methodist, and the later Tractarian Movements in the Christ Church, did not appeal to his heart. He did not find in it the requisite amount of spiritual urge.

Poetry of
Biblical
Prose Texts
Flowed in
His Being

Next, he was a devoted student of Emerson and was

* Bhabani Charan Bannerjee, the famous Brahmandab Upadhyaya was a great friend of Pramathalal and one of the Band. The Bible classes laid the foundation of his future Catholic Faith.

through and through imbued with his ideas. On the cover of his favourite book,—‘Works of Emerson’ was inscribed in bold letters, the words,—‘A New Bible’. He lived and moved in the Oversoul—the Soul that spreads over and interpenetrates all things of the universe,—the universe as one whole entity. The Oversoul re-creates itself as one character in all and through all and also different characters with the whole in the focus, as the creative principle within. This is no ascetic ideal, not the inane negation of the creative principle of life. It means the full life of bliss-supreme in the Oversoul.

**A Devoted,
Student of
Emerson**

He at one time said to a dear friend of his,—“Read a paragraph of Emerson and meditate on it, till the ideas grow into your life and develop themselves through life. This is true understanding through assimilation. This growth will unfold itself and bring its own philosophy.” This is Pramathalal’s characteristic attitude towards studies.

Though Pramathalal was a born priest and pastor, he was also an eminent journalist all through his life. In early life, he used to write in the ‘Liberal’ and the ‘Indian Mirror’, the famous and popular journals of his two great uncles—Keshabchandra and Krishnabehari.

In 1885, when he had just left the college, his elder brother Nandalal brought out ‘The Young Man’,—a fortnightly paper from a press of his own and Pramathalal was an active help in its publication. Its articles immediately drew the unstinted admiration of famous writers and literary critics like Sree Sambhu Chandra Mukherjee of the renowned ‘Ries and Ryots’, Mr. N. N. Ghosh of the famous ‘Indian Nation’, and Reverend Smith, principal of the General Assembly Institution, (now the Scottish Church College),—a great name in the literary world of the time, and others. Rev. Smith even came forward to contribute a series of articles on ‘Plato and Platonism’ to the paper. ‘The young Man’ afterwards was amalgamated with the ‘Interpreter’ of Rishi Pratapchandra, under the title “The Young Man

**A Journalist :
The Young
Men and the
Interpreter**

and the Interpreter", Pramathalal was the editor of the joint paper.

The 'Concord'
Club and
Magazine

Brother Nandalal in 1886, founded the 'Concord Club'* with its weekly journal, in which Brahmagandhab Upadhyaya used to take lively interest.

Soon the weekly journal was turned to a monthly magazine 'Concord', which probably is the second of its kind in India,—the earlier one being the 'Calcutta Review'. In richness of ideas, it can be ranked high even now. Pramathalal, who followed his brother like a shadow in all his works, was on the editorial board and put himself heart and soul into the various activities of the Concord Club.

Since his return from Oxford, he was the Editor of his Mandali organ—an English Weekly, "The World and the New Dispensation", the name being later changed to 'Naba Bidhan'.

Wrote and
Spoke in
Vernacular
of his
Heart.

Pramathalal wrote and spoke always in the vernacular of the heart. Words came free and easy to his pen and lips, without any effort. His word was himself,—the very joy of simplicity. He wrote and spoke as he felt, and he thought as he lived. His was the life of faith, which was a vision and threw a new light on all questions in his life and led him into the mysteries of being. He lived in others and they spoke out through him, and as he wrote and spoke, he never turned his eyes on himself. To him to be self-conscious was not only priggishness, but was a sin.** His was the strength of selflessness

Self-Con-
sciousness
—a Sin

* The main object of the club was the mental, social, moral and physical development of young men through Study circles, Debate societies and Lectures on various subjects like Philosophy, History and Political Science. Even music and sports were within its ambit. The Maharajah of Coochbehar was the patron. Sir William Hunter its President and Sir Gurudas the Vice President. Rev. Kalicharan Banerjee was in charge of literary section and his nephew, Brahmagandhab Upadhyaya took up the charge of physical culture and sports.

** Meadville University offered him a D. D. several times. But Pramathalal could not make himself agree to accept it. In 1928, Dr. Southworth, the Chancellor came to Calcutta and wished to decorate him with the Doctorate. Pramathalal most respectfully declined.

and self-forgetfulness. He never looked into himself except to be conscious of his derelictions and shortcomings. His eyes were fixed on God, and on the men of God and on Keshabchandra, the man of his heart. And his life grew of itself—unconsciously through communion and prayer.

* Pramathalal's style of writing, like that of his brother Nandalal (Bhoolooda) and the other two of the Prayer Meeting 'Trio,'—Benoyendranath and Mohitchandra, had an undefinable charm, all its own,—a subtle grace of spontaneity, a rhythmic flow and a perfection of artless art, with a special note of simplicity, with a mystic vein. He wrote and wrote and carried on extensive correspondence with the large circle of friends,* both abroad and in this country, including Prof. Maxmuller, Edwin Arnold, General Booth, Poet Tuffer, Sir Rothenstein, Rev. Sunderland, Prof. Rhys Davis, Paul Sefasteon, Rev. Stopford Brooke, Miss Welde (the niece of Lord Tennyson), Rev. Southworth, Poet Rabindranath, Dr. Brajendra Nath Seal, and particularly Benoyendranath, Mohitchandra, Khetramohon and others of the Prayer Meeting Band and a host of other celebrities. He was also in constant touch with his dear brethren** of the Nababidhan. The core of his self came out fully through his letters. He was always himself in his writings, which were his very being finding expression.

Style of
Writing—
Subtle
Grace:
Spontaneity

Came out
Best
through
Letters

In 1885, Pramathalal and Mohitchandra joined the Prayer Meeting. It was a great day for the Mandali, when this 'Trio' formed a union of prayerful souls, which grew in strength from day to day.

Prayer
Meeting
1885

Pramathalal left for England in 1895, as the first Manchester Scholar, (Sree Bepin Chandra Pal being the second scholar, in 1898) for the study of Theology in the Manchester College of the Oxford University, in order to equip himself better as a Missionary of the Brahmo

First Pitt-
grimage
1896

* Refer to lost 'Treasure Trove' at Shantikutir after Pramathalal's Death.

** See four volumes of 'Naludar Chithi'

Place for
Himself in
Friends,
Hearts

Samaj. The good wishes of his friends and benedictions of the elders found expressions in the several farewell parties and Upashanas on the occasion. Pramathalal proceeded there in a spirit of a Pilgrim's devotion. Every word he listened to, he listened in a spirit of deep reverence. He felt quite at home there and kept himself busy with his intensely devout studies. By his loving personality, he found a place for himself in the hearts of his friends there,—all well-renowned, both in religious and literary spheres.

The Nest :
For Pilgrims

Before Pramathalal proceeded to England, he was an inmate of 'The Nest',—a home of high ideas and brotherly love and a prayerful spirit*. It was started by his brother Nandalal in 1883, in Bhabani Charan Datta's Lane, near Benoyendranath's house. Of this Home, the saintly Hirananda was the real soul and Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya** the constructive genius,

* The 'Nest' had amongst its inmates, the same spirit of the 'Pilgrim' and of 'Ever-lasting Love' as of the Prayer Meeting, Hirananda writes to Khetramohan in 1885 and 1886—

"Welcome to the dear Fraternal land ! How two 'Pilgrims' in life's Journey meet and infuse new life, fresh vigour into each other, O, my brother!"

"Though the 'Nest' is broken, yet,—cease not to sing to, cease not to commune with one another. When brother birds separated by circumstances meet,—they clasp, they cling, they chirp, they twit, they wing, they weep, they sing ! And so should we do. Mohit's musical murmur and Kali's songs should elevate you and your goodness him. Thus though apart, yet be ever acting same part."

The tree bears not fruit for itself, nor for itself does the stream collect its waters. Truly, we live not to benefit ourselves, but to benefit others. In this alone consists true salvation."

** Since 1881, Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya was an ardent admirer of Brahmananda Keshabchandra. He regarded Keshab as the greatest son of India and looked upon him as his ideal in life ; Rishi Pratapchandra also had a great influence on him. In 1887, he was initiated into the Nababidhan Faith, by his Guru—in Vedantism. Upadhyaya Gour Gobinda Roy. The two prefixes 'Brahmananda' and 'Upadhyaya' to the names of his two teachers, possibly acted on his subconscious mind, when he adopted his new Sanyasi name—'Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya. In the first issue of Harmony' of August 1890, we find—"God raised up Keshabchandra Sen to preach harmony of all religions—in their spirits and in their truths. It is our humble mission to preach and establish Keshab's principle of unity of religion."

Nandalal the inspiring mind, Khetrāmohan the silent goodness spirit and Pramathalal the prayerful heart.

After Pramathalal's return to India in December, 1899, Benoyendranath placed his 'Fraternal Home' in the former's charge and from then on, he became gradually the centre of attraction of the Prayer Meetings. The Bāṇd was his brotherhood, the Mandali the loving and revering family of this beautiful Celibate.

This was a fresh revival of both the institutions, marked by a spiritual upheaval. Pandit Shibanath Shastri had a very pleasant surprise, when he heard that nearly fifty young men, mostly the best products of the University, regularly attended the Prayer Meetings every Saturday, only for Divine worship. The 'Fraternal Home', was shifted to a new abode at 82, Harrison Road, nearer to the 'Prachar Ashram', to enable its associates to be in closer and more intimate contact with the Missionaries.

Spiritual
Revival
Fraternal
Home &
Prayer
Meeting

In 1901, the younger group of the Prayer Meeting and the Fraternal Home, successfully staged Rabindranath's 'Bisarjan' at the court-yard of the Prachar Ashram. Col. Satyendra Nath Mukherjee, Dr. Hemanta Kumar Chatterjee, Dr. Banku Behari Chowdhury, Prafulla Roy Chowdhury, Dwijendra Nath Sen, Haralal Roy, Ashutosh Roy were the main actors. Rajendra Nath Sen and Haridas Chatterjee were the principal actors behind the scenes. Dramatic performances by young students of Schools, Colleges, and Clubs were not common features then. 'Sangit Samaj' on the Cornwallis Street, was the other contemporary institution.

'Bisarjan'
Staged

About this time, brother Nandalal attracted Sadhu T. L. Vaswani, Dr. Reuben, Dr. Hasaram Tharance and Sree Monilal Parekh, with their fine culture and religious enthusiasm, from Western India to the prayerful Bāṇd. Sree Sambhasiva Rao of Andhra and Sree Jamini Kanta Koar wholeheartedly joined the new Brotherhood, after their return from the Meadville Theological College of the U.S.A. The new Home became the new centre of devotion. Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya with his fervour

New Brother-
hood

and zeal was with Pramathalal for a short time. His relationship with Pramathalal was so sweet that even years afterwards, the new members of the 'Home' were shown enthusiastically, the room where Brahmabandhab lived—and wrote and wrote. His mind was then turning from Catholic doctrines to the depth of the Vedantic philosophy. Upadhaya Gour Gobinda's 'Samanya-Vashyas' and Benoyendranath's lectures on Vendanta in 1900, published in his book,—The Intellectual Ideal' in 1902, impressed him much. Brahmabandhab along with the 'Trio' of the Prayer Meeting, was very intimate with Poet Rabindranath. He used to go to the Shantiniketan along with Mohitchandra to help the Poet in starting his Brahmacharya Vidyalay, sometimes in 1901. Brahmabandhav, till his last days, could never get away from Pramathalal and Mohitchandra.*

Brahma-
bandhab
Cant Get
Away

The Bengalee writer, Sree Sarat Kumar Roy, though not actually belonging to the *Mandali*, was attracted by Pramathalal's character while an inmate of the 'Fraternal Home'; Saratkumar brought out his book 'Sadhu Pramathalal',—a biography, in which his highest regards for Pramathalal were expressed. Rev. Chunilal Mukherjee, also then an inmate of the Fraternal Home, is now a Christian Missionary of high rank. Here is some frank outpourings of the heart from him, which would bear a truer testimony of Pramathalal's charm, that attracted people into his fold, than those coming from his own *Mandali*, in a few lines from his 'In Memoriam', which will be interesting—

Saratkumar's
& Chunilal's
Reverent
Remem-
brances
as Inmates
of the Home

"I first knew Pramathalal in the year 1907, when I became a member of the 'Fraternal Home'. Pramathalal was a maker of men, indeed! A life-long celibate as Pramathalal was, he became a centre of influence to the

* Although he had left the fold of Nababidhan and was initiated into Christianity while at Karachi in 1891 and worked through his Journal—'Sophia', he did not lose any of his catholicity of spirit and intense love for his old companions of the Prayer Meeting.

younger people. We all experienced the genial but undoubted power of his silent life, and were drawn close to him as if by a spell. Standing as I do now, outside the Brahmo Samaj, I recall with genuine pleasure my sweet days of fellowship with Pramathalal and others of that denomination, which has not lost any of its fragrance even now. And let me confess that I have not yet met better friends in the new society, with which I now find myself identified."

The Spell
Loses No
Fragrance

"And what was it that became a well of inspiration to Pramathalal? It was an unceasing appetite for spiritual food and a desire to feed hungry souls thereon. I believe that the Nababidhan Brahmo Samaj has a sacred religious life. Religion is never a body of abstract principles, nor is it a constitution devised on an ingenious amalgamation of hybrid conceptions,—half religious and half political. Religion is goodness manifest in flesh. Nobody had ever seen this Bhakta Pramathalal in anger; nobody had ever heard him speak ill of others or use an unkind word. He seemed to be utterly free from concupiscence. I have not looked upon a holier face in the whole of my life."

Goodness
Manifest in
Flesh :
No Holier
Face Yet
Seen

His spirit, although it had its constant life-movements, had also its fixed time for a special exercise every morning along with the inmates of his Home. In this atmosphere of spiritual enthusiasm, Pramathalal was ordained a Missionary, in 1907.

Spiritual
Enthusiasm :
Ordained a
Missionary :
1906

Pramathalal went to Europe for the second time in 1910, as a Delegate of the Brahmo Samaj to 'The Berlin Convention of the Liberal Religions'. The paper read by him there, had an original and novel heading,— 'Prophecies and their Fulfilment'. The idea and the ideals of the Nababidhan was beautifully placed and emphasis was on its Hymns, "In our Hymns is our Bible",—he said. He found in these a note of Universality running through the soul of music divine in forms of exquisite beauty, which has found expression in the Vaishnavite and Sakta poetries of Love and Strength, inspired by Vedantic Abstraction of the Infinite. We

Second
Pilgrimage
to the West :
1910

quote here extracts of some of the fine passages from Pramathalal's paper—

* * * * *

**Tyndal's
Hope :
Light from
the East**

"Is it not time for you to consider seriously whether or not the late Professor Tyndal's hope that 'Light which once came from the East might come again from the same quarter', as expressed to the late Rev. Pratap Chandra Mozoomdar, has been fulfilled? The will of God is not to be confounded with what is called the iron will of a man,—a Napoleon or a Bismarck, but it means the good Grace of God, His mercy, acting according to ways which are quite beyond our ken. Has not He, who has spoken through Moses and the Jewish Prophets, through Christ and his Apostles, spoken also through Zoroaster and Confucius, through Sri Krishna and Buddha, through Mohammad, through Nanak and Sri Chaitanya, to different peoples in different parts of the globe?"

**Possess God
and
Be Possessed**

"The same God has revealed Himself to us in these days in the East, in India, in Bengal, in Calcutta,—in a manner so new, so wonderful, so marvellous! This self-revelation is the New Dispensation. God comes once again to possess all that is His. "The one thing needful", says Amiel, "Is to possess God". How can we possess Him, if we do not give ourselves up to Him, wholly, to be possessed by Him?"

* * * * *

"When a New Dispensation comes, we surrender all to it. The New Dispensation is the Dispensation for the age, for all the world. I invite you with all love and humility, to study the faith and hope which the New Dispensation fills me with, to study the Spirit in all nature wherever we live and move, in all past history, in the whole present."

"We have an endless life before us to live and

belong to God, and to everybody in Him,—to bear one another's burdens, to share one another's joy. We are labourers together with God, to create a new earth and found a new family on it,—the family of the children of the New Dispensation."

Family of
Nababidhan

* * * * *

"Now, if Psalms were sung in ancient Israel, they have been sung anew in modern India,—in Bengal more than in any other province, by us of the New Dispensation more than by any one else. When Pratapchandra visited America, the good poet Whittier got from him the sense of some of these Hymns and rendered them into English verse. Some of these are also to be found in the 'Hymns of Faith and Light' compiled by John Hunter of Glasgow. Has any more been translated by any of you, during the quarter of a century since Whittier met Mazumdar?"

* * * * *

"James Martineau found in German thought, a new world opened to him. Before him, Thomas Carlyle found in Goethe, the man he sought. Goethe found in Italy a new birth for him. Schopenhauer found in the Vedanta the solace of his life. In Bengal you will find to-day in our Hymns a new Bible, which will make all the old Bibles new and living to you, which will make yourself and all the world new to you. Let these hymns of the new self-revelation of God, which we have learnt to call the New Dispensation, be your study by day and your dream by night. In our Hymns a new Bible!"

In our
Hymns—A
New Bible.

* * * * *

Pramathalal was the eldest of the 'Inseparable Trio' of the Prayer Meeting Band, but the separation in this world was ordained by providence. Mohitchandra the youngest of the 'Trio', passed away first and then

Pramathalal
—the Inspir-
ing Spirit
—1912

First to
Come Last
to go

Sangha—
Lucknow

Giridi

Nababidhan
Biswasi
Samity &
Young Men's
Conference

Benoyendranath followed him a few years later. After this, Pramathalal was left as the main source of inspiration for the activities in the spirit of the Naba-bidhan,—which he called his dear *Naba-Sishu* at that time (1914). There was a spirit of revival in the Mandali. The two devout daughters of Keshabchandra, Suniti Debi and Sucharu Debi joined Pramathalal with ardour in the mission work as *Naba-Paricharikas*. A new community spirit sprang up in the form of Nababidhan *Sangha* which gathered at Lucknow, in 1914. New composition of songs were sung through the sangha of Sunity Debi and put to tune by her neice Sudha Debi. A new Brahmo Mandir was established at Giridhi through the munificence of Sree Amritalal Ghosh and many of the community flocked at the place at the time of its consecration ceremony, the religious fervour on the occassion will be remembered long. Karachi, Simla, Monghyr were also witnesses of this enthusiasm.

Rev. Rajeswar Gupta and Dr. Uma Prasanna Ghose, (Pramathalal's intimate friend in early days) were very active at this time in holding the several annual sittings of the 'Nababidhan Biswasi Samity' at Calcutta, Chittagong, Dacca, Mymensingh, Hazaribagh and other places, gaining strength through Pramathalal's active help. With his blessings, there were two sittings of the 'Nababidhan Young Men's Conference', one presided over by Principal Rajendra Nath Sen and the other by Mr. Subodh Chandra Roy. Principal Jitendra Mohon Sen the nephews of Pramathalal and Prof. Satyananda Roy, the cousin, were then connected with the activities of young men, along with Sree J. Neogy and Dr. Nabajiban Banerjee, with their organising abilities. Sree Pulak Chandra Singha the new composer and Bidhan Murali Satyendra Nath Dutta, the new ministrel, provided inspiration to the movement.

Dr. Nabajiban, Dr. Lalitmohon and some other inmates of the 'Fraternal Home' started at this centre, their 'Nursing Brotherhood', a very useful institution for social service amongst the poor sick. The Burdwan Flood

Relief and Bankura Famine Relief were organised by them. Sree Benoy Krishna Gupta, nephew of Pramathalal—the man of silence, was a silent worker in all managerial capacities in the responsible charge of accounts and finance. Prof. Satyendra Nath Roy (Nadan) used to come down often from Lucknow, to replenish his spiritual strength and fervour from Pramathalal's Prayers and to infuse the same in others by his Nadanisms. Nadan, the child spirit went to the Sealdah Station to see off Pramathalal on his Berlin pilgrimage and then rushed down to Howrah on the advice of a porter and reached there when the engine was about to steam off. He had just the time to take dust off Pramathalal's feet and while still panting for breath, amused all by recounting his adventure. But Nadan, the unconcerned, did not blush,—he had tears glistening in his eyes.

Nursing
Brother-
hood :
Famine and
Flood Relief

Nadan

Pramathalal visited England on two other occasions after this and came in close touch with some of the finest souls there. His third visit to England in 1911, shortly after his previous one, was memorable in as much as it was then given to him by Providence a role to play in helping the West to discover the Poet of the Age, in fact the Poet of all ages,—our Rabindranath. Pramathalal lent his hand in bringing the poet out of his peaceful leafy bower at Shantiniketan or out of the quiet boat-wandering on the Padma, round about the heart of villages at solitary Selaidah, on to the glaring light of the busy West. At Pramathalal's request Nadan (Prof. Satyendra Nath Roy of Lucknow) had long since been rendering into English some of the Poet's beautiful poems and songs, which Pramathalal liked best. A few were done up by Principal Lalit Mohon Chatterjee (Father-in-law of Lord Sinha) and some more were taken up by Pramathalal himself. These were broadcast by Pramathalal amongst his friends of the West personally while he was there and even through correspondence.

Pramathalal's Third
Pilgrimage &
Discovery of
The Poet by
the West.

Sir William Rothenstein, of the Royal Academy of Arts, was a friend of Pramathalal. We gather from

Sir William
Rothenstein
& New Light
from East

Rothenstein's recollections—'Men and Memories: 1900-1932', published by Faber and Faber, London in 1934, that Pramathalal took Dr. Brajendra Nath Seal to his house at Hampstead Heath, to be introduced to him. Their talks veered round Rabindranath and this fascinated the Artist. Before this, early that year, Sir Rothenstein had read one of the Poet's short stories that had appeared in the Modern Review and some of the English renderings of Rabindranath's poems, which came into his hand. He was charmed with the mystic vein and the deep spirituality in the poems. After his talks with Pramathalal and Brojendranath, he grew very anxious to meet the Poet and to introduce him to the literary world of the West, so that their minds might be illuminated with the new light from the East. He requested Pramathalal and Brajendranath to write to the Poet how keen they all were to have him in their midst and to urge him to come down to England.

S. O. S. to
The Poet

Poet's Pil-
grimage &
Pramatha-
lal's
Persuasive
Letters

On the other side, the idea of a visit to England was in the Poet's mind, at this time, Like Pramathala's, this would also be his third visit to England, but after a gap of long twenty years from his second visit. The young Poet, who visited England for his studies in 1878 when only 18 and only for a short while in 1890, had by this time blossomed unto a full bright flower. His mind now turned towards the inner depth of his soul and the Soul of all souls. His proposed visit this time would be exactly of the same nature of Pilgrimage like that of the Pilgrims of the Prayer Meeting, Pramathalal and Benoyendranath, and before them, their leaders Keshabchandra and Pratapchandra. The Pilgrimage was to find out the manifold manifestations of the Spirit in different climes and distant lands, to interpret their own faith, and by exchange of ideas to gather fresh momentum for more creative urges. For the Poet, this would also help him with experience for his ambitious project of 'Viswa-Bharati'. The lurking hesitancy in the Poet's mind was removed by the persuasive letters from Pramathalal and Brojendranath.

The preparation for the Pilgrimage did not consist of mere packing up. For the benefit of those who did not understand Bengalee, the Poet rendered into English some selected Songs and Poems from *Gitanjali*, *Gitimalya*, *Kheya* and *Naibedya*. The English *Gitanjali* or Song Offerings was not a mere translation from Bengali,—it was a veritable transfiguration of his ideas into a new form, a new rhyme, in a new light.

English
Gitanjali :
A Trans-
figuration

On his arrival in England, the Poet met the Artist and presented to him the English *Gitanjali*. Rothenstein was glad indeed and introduced the Poet to the great thinkers and luminaries of the English literary world, either in their homes or in his own Drawing Room or at several Receptions, held in the Poet's honour. At these meetings, the Poet had to recite from his English *Gitanjali*. The depth of thoughts in the poems and the added beauty of the recitation through his sweet melodious voice and forceful mode of delivery, at once captivated the minds of all who heard them. It was indeed a case of *Veni, Vidi, Vici*, for the Poet. Mr. Nevinson, the great liberal leader and editor of the famous Journal 'Nation', who was present in one of the sittings, began writing about the Poet in his paper and the Poet soon came to occupy his rightful place as a world figure, as Bengal's Poet, as India's Poet, as the Poet of the Age,—nay, of all Ages.

The meeting between Sir Rothenstein and the Poet may be regarded as the prelude to the Poet's being crowned with the Nobel Laurels*. Sir Rothenstein introduced *Gitanjali* to poet W. B. Yeats, which so charmed the latter that he would not leave the manuscript for a moment and would carry it with him even while travelling and meditate upon it while having his meals in the hotel. "This new Renaissance in our country has stirred my blood as nothing has"—so said Yeats to an

Gitanjali to
Rothenstein
—To Yeats
—To Nobel
Laurels.

* The Poet of Bengal was probably for the first time hailed as 'The World Poet' by Pramathalal's friend Brahmabandhab in his paper 'Sophia', of 1st. September, 1900—thirteen years before the Poet received the Nobel Prize.

Indian doctor. Yeats wrote a beautiful Introduction to the English *Gitanjali*,—the book which won the Poet his Nobel Laureateship. A limited number of copies were issued by the India Society, in 1912, but in March 1913, Mess Macmillan and Co., London, published it with seven re-prints, that very year.

**Gitanjali
Dedicated
To the
Artist :
The Artist
Dedicates
'Six Potraits'
To
Pramathalal
&
Brajendranath**

Gitanjali was dedicated to Sir Rothensten in 1912 and the Artist in 1915, "affectionately" dedicated his famous 'Six Potraits of Rabindranath' to the Poet's "friends", Pramathalal and Brojendranath. So, even after these years, the Artist still remembered the happy days of his introduction to the Poet. In the dedication, the Artist referred to the Poet as "their friend". And the introducing of the Philosopher and then of the Poet to Sir Rothenstein meant "friendship" towards the Poet and were certainly acts of "affection" towards the Artist, on the part of Pramathalal—and the Artist responded to this with his own "affection".

In his last Pilgrimage to England, Pramathalal started —'Keshab-Niketan' there—an institution was a residential annexe, for carrying on works in the spirit of Keshabchandra.

**Shifts to
Prachar
Ashram :
1919**

When the old Missionaries were going to their rest one by one, a vacuum was felt amongst them and on the death of Bhai Braja Gopal Neogy, Pramathalal shifted to the 'Prachar Ashram' at 3, Ramanath Mazumdar Street, in 1919, to fill up the void.

**Bhai
Brajagopal :
Depth of
Realisation &
Flow of
Feeling**

While speaking of this time, our thoughts go back to the soul-stirring Upashanas of Revered Brajagopal which were reminiscent of the depth of realisation of Rishi Pratapchandra and the flow of feeling of Upadhyaya Gaurgobinda. When the 'Prachar Ashram' was being denuded of its past glory about devotional souls and rich heritage of Sadhan life, with Bhai Peary Mohon Chowdhury infirm and bed-ridden and Bhai Baikuntha Nath Ghose, Gopal Chandra Guha, Chandra Nath Das and Dr. Kamakhya Charan Banerjee practically invalids,—Bhai Brajagopal was left the lone figure in the 'Prachar Ashram' still in harness. He founded a Trust for the

Prachar Ashram, to ensure the continuation of its mission and various relief works. Bhai Brajagopal along with Benoyendranath, re-organised the Congregational constitution of the Bharatvarshiya Brahmo Mandir. A 'Bidhan Education Society' was established; the 'Keshab Academy' and the 'Victoria Institution' had new lives and were affiliated to it. Besides being actively engaged in organising the Mandali, he did a very useful work by publishing a new edition of Rishi Pratapchandra's *Ashis*, after it has been long out of print.

Bhai Akshay Kumar Lodh was looking after the management of the Ashram and he was in charge of the Nababidhan publications on Philosophy, Comparative Religion, Historical and Biographical studies, which were products and achievements of our great predecessors in the Mandali,—the results of the cultivation of the spirit of Harmony and Bhakti. The publications are now in the hands of his worthy successor, Sree Sati Kumar Chatterjee.

Akshay
Kumar :
The New
'Vritya' :
Repository of
Nababidhan
Literatures

Bhai Brajagopal and Pramathalal, were the main sources of fire that kept the devotional life of the Mandali glowing. Brajagopal was for a long time the Secretary of the Congregation and after his death in 1919, Pramathalal who was the Assistant Secretary, took over the charge and continued till his death in 1930. In this work, Pramathalal was greatly helped by his cousin Sree Dharendra Nath Sen, the youngest brother of Benoyendranath. He, by his devoted hard labour, relieved Pramathalal of most of the official duties, thus keeping him free to devote more time to the spiritual affairs of his flock.

With Pramathalal came Jaminikanta to the *Prachar Ashram* and joined the former in his devotional duties and helped him in the editorial work of the *Nababidhan Journal*. The brunt of hard labour was, in fact, his. It may be said that Pramathalal was the inspiration and Jaminikanta was the man of inspired action. Between the two, the Mandali organ was made a power, for moral and spiritual uplift.

Jaminikanta :
Of Inspired
Work

Dwijadas :
Bold Upright

Professor Dwijadas Dutta came to stay in the *Prachar Ashram* in intimate companionship with Pramathalal. Dwijadas belonged to the District of Tipera and had his early education there. He stood first in the Middle English examination and went to Dacca for further study and was there till he passed his First Arts. At Dacca, he fell under the influence of Bhai Banga Chandra Roy, Bhai Beharilal Sen, Maulavi Girish Chandra Sen, Maulavi Jalaluddin Ahmed, Durga Nath Roy, Ishan Chandra Sen, Mahim Chandra Sen and other Brahmo leaders. With a senior grade scholarship, he joined the Calcutta Presidency College and was a favourite student of Sir Alfred Croft. He passed his M. A. Examination with credit and had his first appointment as a teacher at Chittagong.

Straight
Man
Bends Not

While at Calcutta, he had the good fortune to be in close touch with Keshabchandra for some time and he was mainly attracted by Brahmananda's new ideal of the spirit of Harmony, which was his own guiding principle of life till the end. From Chittagong he was selected for the Executive service and was sent to England, with a Cirencester Scholarship at the Royal Agricultural College. On his return, he was appointed as a Settlement Officer at Madhubani, in Bhagalpur. He was a strict upright man and immediately made his presence felt by reversing all irregular convictions in the Reserve Forest cases. This bold man had then to be shunted off to the quieter Education Department again, as professor of Agriculture in the Shibpore Engineering College and then to other insitutions. As Principal of the Chittagung College, he protested against the rigorous system of detention of students after class examinations and initiated a liberal system of promotion, with vigorous after-care for the failures. Boldness and spirit of independence—were the hall-marks of his character. When Ullaskar, his revolutionary son, returned home one day with injuries after a scuffle with some local Goondas, his first anxious enquiry was not as to how his son felt

about the wounds, but whether the Goondas had been thrashed severely.

Such was the man who came into loving contact of Pramathalal, the man of smiling silence, and a mighty lion was tamed into a gentle sheep of the flock. But Dwijadas wielded a powerful pen. He contributed several articles to Pramathalal's journal, all marked by careful marshalling of facts, and psychological insight. One of these was a series under the heading—'Behold the Man', which delineated some of the salient features of Keshabchandra's spiritual developments. Three distinct phases characterised Dwijadas's life-cycle in the Nababidhan,—the gentle studious disciple, the impulsive run-away youth and the return of a wise mature prodigal with fully developed spiritual vision. An erudite Vedantic pandit, he was mentioned by Prof. Maxmuller as an Indian authority on Vedanta. He had the unique distinction of being also a great scholar in Arabic and Persian languages and he had thoroughly studied the Quoran. In his book—'Suktas of the Veda and Sura of Quoran'—the Vedantic teachings and the doctrines of the Quoran, have been placed together, to bring out clearly the similarities of thoughts in the two.

Pramathalal
—The Lion
Tamer

Life Cycle
in Naba-
bidhan

If he was great as a scholar, he was still greater as a man of Faith. His last days were spent in an earnest attempt at Hindu-Moslem unity—as the solution of the great national problem of India. His was the spirit of harmony—*Dharma Samanyaya* of the Nababidhan. After Pramathalal's death, he returned, in 1931, to his own place at Comilla and started his 'Dharma-Samanyaya Ashram'. From here was published his book,—'Dharma-Samanyaya', a product of his profound scholarship, giving full expression to his idea.

Dharma
Samanyaya

Prof. Niranjana Neogy, whenever in the Prachar Ashram, was gathering the harvest of his revered father's and his dear Naloda's spiritual lives, for the get-up for his future *Mandali* service. His beautiful and very useful publication—'The Apostles and the Missionaries of the Nababidhan', on behalf of the 'Brotherhood' at Prachar

Niranjan's
Beautiful
Album

Ashram, indicates his deep devotion and wonderful laborious perseverance. This is a fine Album of Photos, with short biographical sketches of the leaders of our *Mandali*, which shall ever remember him gratefully—even if this was his only contribution to it. Sree Debendra Nath Bose of the Prayer Meeting Band with his scholarly poet son Prabhatkumar, also lived in the spiritual atmosphere of the Pracher Ashram of this time.

Group of
Enthusiasts

A new group of enthusiastic workers organised itself around Pramathalal to instil a new life in the Mandali. Dr. D. N. Mallik, Dr. P. K. Sen, Sree Dharendra Lall Khastagir, Sree Sachindra Nath Ghose and others were helping with their wise counsels. Doctors Jagamohon Das, Debendra Nath Banerjee, Probodh Chandra Roy and Anukul Chandra Mitra were for a long time active members of the Executive Committee of the congregation. But the two intellectuals who were captured by Pramathalal's charm were Prof. Kharga Sinha Ghose and Dr. Bimal Chandra Ghose. After Pramathalal's death, both the Ghoses became secretary, one after the other. They did, in fact, everything connected with the life of the *Mandali*. Dr. Sachi Kumar Chatterjee was their able Assistant Secretary.

Quiet
Kharga-
singha
with Vast
Studies

Prof. Khargasingha, who had retired as professor of Philosophy in the Hazaribagh College, settled down permanently at Calcutta. A teacher of philosophy though he was by profession, his general knowledge was remarkable. In a meeting of the study-circle at Shanti Kutir, an eminent professor of science delivered a learned popular lecture on the 'Quantum Theory'. Prof. Khargasingha's presidential summing up was no less interesting and illuminating in its bearing on life spiritual. His study of Nababidhan literature was vast and through the small book—'Keshabchandra and the Reformations', he wanted to place before the public eyes—those aspects of Keshabchandra's life, which have a popular appeal.

Dr. B. C. Ghose was a product of the Universities of Allahabad and Cambridge, but his life-work was at Calcutta. He was the Principal of the Vidyasagar College

and also the head of the Physics Department. He was also professor of Physiology in two of the Medical Colleges. He used to take post-graduate classes on Comparative Religion and Experimental Psychology, in the University. Dr. Sadler, the Chairman of the University Commission, after examining some of the Calcutta Colleges, smilingly remarked about him to Sir Ashutosh—“This is funny, I find that this Professor is here, there and everywhere, like the ghost in ‘Hamlet’. What a wonder !” There was a roar of laughter,—and the smiles on Dr. Ghose’s lips were expressions of light and sweetness. He used also to be a regular Examiner at different examinations on various subjects (even Mathematics)—not only of the home University, but also of Allahabad and Lucknow. He was master of several languages,—a thorough-going man of profound scholarship.*

**Bimal-
chandra :**
Versatile
Scholar with
‘Kultur’

A religious preacher, a veteran teacher, an earnest social worker, he was always dressed in Khaddar Dhoti and Punjabi of immaculate white and was keen on the political aspiration of the country as also on the civic duties and responsibilities. He was a Councillor and Alderman of the Calcutta Corporation for more than ten years. He founded the ‘Saraju Sadan’ for destitute girls and ‘Sunity Sikshalaya’—a School for girls. He was one of the pioneers in the establishment of ‘Bodhana’—an institution for the mentally deficient children, at Jhargram. Dr. Ghose’s special knowledge in child-psychology has enabled the institution to have a rapid progress. Such a versatile genius came under the sway of Pramathalal’s loving personality.

Dr. Prem Sundar Bose was another admiring follower of Pramathalal. He would come to Calcutta from Bhagalpur for the Utsab Upashana. He wrote a treatise

* Dr. Ghosh’s mind,—philosophical, scientific and literary, had the versatility of German ‘Kultur’, without its shakiness. It was as deep as it was vast. At the same time it grew in complexity as life itself, functioning in all its aspects—yet never suffering a loss in depth. If this was true of his intellect,—it was equally true of his heart,—noble and sympathetic to all. He was a true fundamentalist, and he threw a new light on all the manifold subjects discussed by him.—Benimadhav ; ‘Life of Dr. B. C. Ghosh : by Prabhat Bose.’

Prem-sundar
Admiring
Silent
Philosopher

on Hindu Philosophy and got his Doctorate from the Berlin University. He was a silent, loving, devout soul and his study of modern Philosophy, was as deep as his mastery over Indian Philosophy, and both these had clear expositions in his learned sermons on Neo-idealism and Neo-realism.

Sri Siddheswar Sarkar was a well-read man and a Pramathalal's man. Few outside his close circle of friends knew how deep was his Theological studies, particularly that of Nababidhan literature. More wonderful was his collection of old Records and Papers of the *mandali*. This valuable store was at the disposal of Pramathalal, for the articles and editorial notes for his journal. Sri Jnanendra Chandra Banerjee, the District and Sessions Judge was another Pramathalal's man, whose zeal and energy for devotional work daily grew with age. His library also was big, but bigger was his enthusiasm to pour over the books and assimilate them. After retirement, he kept himself engaged in fully utilising his library in the publication of several books, some of these products being on the detailed studies on different aspects of Keshabchandra's life. He edited the complete collection of Chiranjib's songs and an enlarged edition of Brahmo Sangit and Sankirtan, also the birth-centenary volume of Upadhaya's big work—'Acharya Keshab Chandra.' For all his labours he was rewarded with Pramathalal's sweet companionship, during the closing chapter of his life, continuously for about three months at his Allahabad 'Gnan-Kutir', six months before Pramathalal passed away.*

Gnan-chandra :
Judgment &
Zeal with
Age : His
Library

* Pramathalal was then in poor health, but with the tender care of the family and play in tune with nature in the lovely garden, he improved somewhat. Pramathalal was popular there for his love for the three 'P's—Pappya, Patti-lebu and Prayers,—feeding himself on the delicious pappyas and drinking sharbat from patti-lembus, growing in the garden to his heart's content and free to get deeply immersed in prayers most of the time. Although it was only during the later period of Jnanendrachandra's life that he was drawn to Pramathalal closely, his early religious life started in 1876 with regular visits to the Brahma Mandir,—gazing at the face of Keshabchandra sitting on the pulpit and listening with rapt attention to his 'smitamay Baris.' From 1878, he was regularly attending Keshabchandra's Moral and Theological classes at Kamal Kutir, on Sunday noons. Narendranath (Vivekananda) was his fellow student in these classes and was fortunate to be allotted a role to play in the Naba-Brindaban drama,—Gnanendrachandra being left out, as he could not sing well.

When Brahmananda Keshabchandra came to his residence *Kamal Kutir* on the Circular Road, the Missionaries formed their group of houses in the adjoining plot of land—called the *Mangal Para*. Rishi Pratapchandra had his *Shantikutir*, the 'Abode of Peace', next door at 84, Upper Circular Road. He was born in 1840, ordained a missionary in 1862 and after years of hard labour for his Mandali, he passed away on the 27th May, 1905. After his death his pious wife Sm. Saudamini Debi, out of the fulness of her heart, dedicated *Shantikutir* with its compound, valued then at about Rupees Forty thousand (its present value should be more than four lakhs), together with a fairly large sum of money in the Bank, to the sacred memory of her revered husband.

Shanti-Kutir
Dedicated
to Sacred
Memory

The life of Rishi Pratapchandra was nothing but a self-consecration to the *Mandali*, only to preach and interpret the doctrines of Nababidhan. He worked hard to raise man to the height of devotion, where the life becomes merged into the 'Spirit of God'. This spirit is of all times and of all places on earth as well as in heaven. It found music in his 'Heart Beats' and revealed itself through all its movements and services of the New Dispensation, in the light of conscience—the 'Silent Pastor'. Pratapchandra toured round the world on his Pilgrimage on four occasions,—in 1874, 1883, 1893 and 1900.

Nothing could be a better memorial to such a dedicated life and all his belongings were transferred to a Board of Trustees in January, 1918 and the Trust duly registered. The object of the Trust was mainly to give a home to the home-less Missionaries and workers, the Pilgrims of the Nababidhan, devoted to the service of the Mandali. '*Shanti Kutir* became the *Prachar Ashram*' and Pramathalal along with Jaminikanta removed themselves there in May, 1928. There could not be a worthier inheritor of Pratapchandra's property than Pramathalal, the only surviving spiritual son of the Rishi,—of the 'Trio', Benoyendranath and Mohitchandra, the other two then enjoying the Rishi's spiritual riches in eternity.

Pratap-
chandra
Memorial
Trust

Pramathalal
Shifts to
Shanti-
Kutir—1928
The New
Prachar
Ashram

A New
Centre of
Spiritual
Activities

A real devotional life opened itself in the *Shanti Kutir* through *Upashanas* and other spiritual activities. Sree Ganesh Prasad was bringing out new editions of Keshabchandra's Bengalee works, with a new arrangement subjectwise and the Mandali organ, 'Nababidhan' edited by Pramathalal used to be published from there. The old place of 'Prachar Ashram' at 3, Rama Nath Mazumdar Street with its glorious past, was converted into a Student's Home under Bhai Aksay Kumar Lodh, in the pattern of the 'Fraternal Home'.

Thus the *Shanti Kutir* became the new nucleus of Mandali life. Utsabas (particularly the *Brahmica* and the *Juba Utsabas*), and the annual community feasts or *Priti Bhojans*, memorial services and functions of a socio-religious character were planned and carried out from this centre.

Dr.
Satyendra-
nath's Naba-
bidhan Trust

Dr. Satyendra Nath Sen, Benoyendranath's second brother, an enthusiast of the 'Prayer Meeting Band', felt inspired to draw up a suitable memorial to the Rev. Kanti Chandra Mitra,—our universal 'Kakababu', who loved to call himself the 'Servant' (ভূত) of the Mandali. This is the 'Nababidhan Trust'—a comprehensive scheme, comprising in its ambit, the centralisation of the works and organisations of the Mandali and creation of Memorial Funds for preservation and improvement of memorials already in the 'Kamal Kutir', 'Shanti Kutir' and 'Mangal Para' and to start new memorials to the other missionaries and lay-workers of the Mandali. Now that Dr. Satyendranath is no more, Principal Jitendramohon, his worthy son-in-law, it is hoped, would take up the work left unfinished by Satyendranath, as he has now free time to revise the plan and work it out in the spirit of the age and on modern lines. He may have his brother-in-law Prof. Nirmal Chandra Sinha, with his ground-work of the educationist and organiser and the nephews of Dr. Satyendranath, to help him in this matter.

Harisundar Das, Swaprakas Das, Dinanath Sarkar, the ardent admirers of Pramathalal, were by his side in the

service of the Mandali. A combination of four enthusiasts also made up their mind to throw themselves up, at ~~Pramathalal's~~ ^{Mandalis} disposal. They were Sreejuts Hari Prosad Mazumdar, Jatindra Nath Mazumdar, Suresh Chandra Roy and Milananda Roy,—all freshly retired from Government service, with a store of experience of systematic secretarial work. They sincerely desired to put life and vigour into the several organisations of the Mandali, through a process of centralisation and re-orientation. Several Conferences were held under the ¹⁹⁴⁹⁻⁵⁰ presidentship of Dr. Bidhanchandra Roy, which resolved to re-use the 'Brahmo Samaj of India' as the parent body of the different Samajes of India with the 'Shantikutir' as its Home. But, alas! they were called to rest quite early and were not spared to settle down to their proposed schemes. In all organisational matters, the wise counsel of Pramathalal's cousin, Sree Bijon ^(S. B. Sen) Behari Sen was always at the disposal of the Mandali.

Other
Brothers

All the Nababidhan publications and old papers were shifted to the 'Prachar Ashram' at 'Shanti Kutir' from its old place. Unfortunately, most of these could not be saved from the ravages of the great Calcutta Riot.

But more sad has been the loss of Pramathalal's 'Treasure Trove'. It has been told already that his inner self came out beautifully through his charming letters. Some of those written to his dear ones, had been collected and published in six volumes, by Sreemati Sunity Roy and Prof Satyananda Roy, helped by Sreemati Nirvarpriya Ghosh. For this, the gratitude and prayers of the Mandali will always be with them. But the choicest letters which Pramathalal received all his life, very dear to him and fondly preserved in a suit-case kept by his bed-side, were left uncared for in the damp room of the ground-floor, after his demise. These were completely destroyed by white-ants. The Nababidhan publications could be reprinted, but the lovely letters,—

Pramathalal's
Treasure
Trove Lost :

which included a fairly big bunch from poet Rabindranath* are lost for ever. It was an irreparable loss to the *Mandali*,—to the world at large, for the matter of that.

While at 'Shanti Kutir', Pramathalal's health broke down gradually and he passed away there in 1930.

Saudamini Debi's sudden death on 20th April, 1931, under the most tragic circumstances, cast a deep shadow of grief over the minds of the whole community. She did not long outlive her dear Pramathalal. The congregation of the Bharatvarshya Brahmo Mandir has been now entrusted with the management of the 'Shanti Kutir'.

Brother Jaminikanta, for sometime kept up the fire burning in the *Prachar Ashram*. He afterwards left for his dear Bhuluda's Karachi and after the partition of India, has now gone to Bombay, with all the devout souls of the Karachi brothers-in-faith. May Pramathalal's soul bless us that the Institution may re-shine in all its past glory. Let the Memorial be true to its purpose, in the service of the *Mandali*.

Pramathalal only left behind the mortal frame,—he was all spirit and lived in the blessed company of, and in living touch with, the souls and growing in the Supreme Soul. To come to him was to be in the presence of a living spirit, to know a soul-life. Through his eyes beamed out the light of the soul; in him pulsated the stream of deep inspiration, through his tongue flowed out the burning words of strong faith,—everything was spiritualised in and about him. He observed and joined with the fullness of heart, the celebrations of the days in sacred memory of the men of faith and great adventures of all saints and prophets in the domain of spirit. He had a calendar before him with days consecrated to

His Soul
Life

* Kumud Behari Sen was one of the inmates of Pramathalal's *Prachar-Ashram* at Shanti Kutir. He considers himself blessed as he was shown some of these treasures by Pramathalal himself. In one, the Poet wrote—"You write that you have no command over language! Mind you please whatever comes out from your pen is language—beautiful. For Heaven's sake, do please write on,—please go on writing". The blessed Kumud regrets that he does not remember many of these, but this sweet line, he cannot forget.

those spiritual revivals, marked up. He would call all to work and work in the vast universe created by the New Dispensation.

Pramathalal would often recite the sloka of the Bhagabat, in which God Says—"I love my Bhakta, and I love the Bhakta of my Bhakta more". Bhakta's Bhakta shows the Bhakta in his being, the Bhakta shows the Bhagaban in his being and Bhagaban comes out with a garland of Bhaktas and a garland of all men—saints and sinners. For Pramathalal, it was life to live in Keshab and Keshab to him was all the prophets and saints harmonised and organised into the unity of lives. Bhai Baldeo Narayan, a missionary of the Patna Naba-bidhan Brahma Samaj used to say that the two brothers, —'Naloo' and 'Bhooloo' (Brother Nanda Lal Sen) were the two spiritual sons of Keshabchandra and Pratapchandra. He believed that in Pramathalal was fulfilled Brahmananda's fervent prayer in his last days, for 'one true son' (একটি সুসন্তান ভিক্ষা)

Bhakta's
Bhakta

He lived in the festive rejoicings of communion and the in-breathing and in-flow of the Spirit—and surely this is veritable Utsab! His life was an eternal Utsab. His eating and drinking, his sleep and waking up, his study and worship,—all were Utsabs. He knew nothing but Utsab. If there was any perplexity, his advice was —"Go and dive deep in *Utsab*". If there was any turmoil, any discordant misunderstanding or bitterness of feeling anywhere,—why, he was found lost in his *Utsab*. And the flow of words conveying light and true wisdom sprang out of the depth of *Utsab*. On the side of a sick-bed in the midst of pain and anguish, he would speak of (রোগের উৎসব) the *Utsab* of ailment! If there was any bereavement, any occasion for grief,—'turn grief into *Utsab*'! Whoever had heard of 'Utsab of death' before! His was the life of ministration and ministration of life. Ministration is a divine ordination, one carries with him from birth to birth,—a new birth in the ever-new, ever-fresh.

Life : an
Eternal
Utsab

Perpetual
Childhood :
The Artist,
Poet Sadhu
& the Wise
—Play
Together

Pramathalal lived in perpetual childhood. He was the *Gopal* of his Mandali. He was a child of faith and as he grew in his devotion, he grew in his babyhood. The book of potraits of Poet Rabindranath by Sir William Rothenstein R. A. was published by Messrs. Macmillan and Co., London, in 1915. "To Bhai Pramathalal Sen and Dr. Brajendra Nath Seal these six drawings of their friend are affectionately dedicated"—so we find in the precious book of Arts. Reference has thus been made to the names without any hyperbolic epithets or superfluous superlatives and reference to the Poet is as simple 'friend' of theirs. This is indeed a happy hit of the Artist's inspiration. The two opposites, the childhood of intense faith and the child-hood of ripe encyclopoedic mind was made to meet in one-ness of the child like simplicity and perfect art of artlessness, to play together with the childhood of poetry. So, Sir Rothenstein did remember—how for the first time, his childhood of arts was introduced to the childhood of wisdom and then to the childhood of poetry, by the childhood of faith.

The Mona-
Lisa Smile

And what a child's sweet smile Pramathalal had ! It was a winning smile that can command anything from you ; a sweet smile that is an ample recompense for your transgressing ; a benignant smile that soothes all pains and heals all wounds ; a gentle smile of 'Mona Lisa' appeal that means redemption for the wicked and makes the sad one smile too. At his smiling bidding, some writing was sent to him for his journal. In acknowledgment of this, he just wrote back,—“Got the Article ; when shall I get the Man ?” (লেখা তো পেলাম ; লোকটিকে কবে পাব) And he did get his man !

The Com-
manding
Smile

With his generous smile he raised the insignificant man to the Pulpit. This man does not remember what happened, what was uttered, but remembers with what trembling feet he got up the aisle and came down transformed through vision of and communion with Pramathalal's *Nabisishu*—a Pramathalal's man from then on.

In the mind charged with the spirit of Pramathalal, several beautiful pictures of him come floating vividly before its eyes. During the Jubilee celebration of the New Dispensation, he carried its flag to be unfurled in the Sradhananda Park. With what intensity of feeling did he hug it to his bosom! His very soul was in it. He was the living symbol of the New Dispensation, of the harmony of all religious prophets and characters. Year after year, for these many years, during *Utsabs* he would lead the *Arati* with the soul ablaze, perfectly in tune with the music glorifying the Divine Mother, resplendent (জয় মাতঃ, জয় মাতঃ) in all its grandeur and sublimity. Then, the unearthly glow over his face, transfigured by the in-rush of spirit, when sitting on the pulpit with his flowing robes, for morning Upashana of the whole day Utsab! It looked as pure as white lily after morning bath, and the soul centred on the Mother, the spirit flowed out in a tremendous rush through his voice in his Adoration (আরাধনা) Prayers, and Benedictions.

Pramathalal
& Attuned to
Nababidhan
Music

His last ministration was probably on the occasion of the consecration of the Yoga spirit of Brother Dr. B. C. Ghosh. Pramathalal's was a life of self-consecration and he would never be himself so much, as when engaged in Upashanas on such ceremonies. His Adorations (আরাধনা) were always realisation of the personal God; it was heart to heart and soul to soul contact,—an uplifting and creative and re-creative power.

In everything about him there was a spontaneity, which lent a charm to what he said and did. Life spoke itself out through his voice, eyes, understanding and impulses. There was nothing of sham or artificiality about him. He was a real man,—with a beautifully divine grace. Nothing could tempt him away from the line chalked out for him by the Divine Mother. It is said that a true Vaishnaba can never go a step outside Brindaban and for him, it may be said that, he never went a step beyond his Naba-Brindaban, (নব-বৃন্দাবন)

A Real Man
in Naba-
Brindaban

the living paradise of the Man of the Nababidhan and its band.

There alone he saw his Rishi-souls and Buddha, his Jesus and Mohammad, his Nanak and Gauranga, his Emerson and General Booth. There alone he found all the places of his pilgrimage,—Naimisharanya and Vadarikasram, Haridwar and Baranashi, Brindaban and Gaya, Jerusalem and Mecca, Sree-Khetra and Navadwip, his Chelsea and Concord.

Depth of
Infinite
Silence—
Its Music

There alone he got initiated into the mysteries of all religions, scriptures, sages, temples, stupas, maths, churches, monasteries and masjids. In these he lived, moved and had his being. There he lit up his light of knowledge, drew his inspiration and got a perpetual flow of life in the spirit. Such was our *Nalooda*! Yes, his eyes had infinite mysteries and his words were pregnant with deep eternal significance,—and his spirit of communion would find a Voice of Silence within. He was really a man of silence, in the depth of infinite silence, out of which flowed an endless stream of music and harmony of creation.

Faith

He was really a man of faith,—faith in God, in the men of God. Faith was his light and life, meals and drink, the air he breathed and the rock on which he built his character. It was a new creation and a new creative urge and the source of light and foundation of his philosophy. He opened himself out to men of faith but would shrink back into himself when in the midst of vanities of arid, lifeless, uncreative intellectualism. His cry was "Behold the Man—behold with an eye of faith, and faith illumines the understanding."

Without
Self: Yet
a Power

Yes, his faith was a power,—a power to convert and re-create, to bring new hope and a new heart, a new spirit to the lifeless, light to the blind, courage to the drooping spirit, whom he would draw to his bosom with arms out-stretched. He would give a tongue to the mute and dumb, whom he would place on the pulpit and the mere ordinary person did come away with a new heart

to unravel the mysteries of the spirit and to find new light in the midst of 'encircling gloom.'

Such was the man who passed away behind the veil, crossed the bar, on June 30th 1930, at the age of 63. And the voice which was almost lost became full and natural, when he began singing in the small hours of the day he passed away. This woke up others from their sleep,—and all joined him in his singing.

In between the songs, the silence was broken by his usual sombre melodious utterances, (*Hari-bole*) "Glory to *Hari*", in a low voice though, which has always been quite a natural feature with him all his life. This expression would ever come out of his lips suddenly and unconsciously, either in the midst of meditation or in course of lively conversation. He named the songs, he wished to hear,—"From region to higher region, from life to richer life, lead Thou me on.....", "I am immortal and have conquered death and put on immortality! O Ineffable Beauty, I am lost in Thee....." and others. And the last two were, "Remove the veil—and let me in to see Thee, face to face, to my heart's content.....", (মোহ আবরণ কর উন্মোচন, প্রাণ ভরে একবার দেখি হে তোমায়!) "In my eternal rest, I dive, I dive in the sea of joy—the joy unspeakable of my heart,.... .." (এবার ডুবিলাম, ডুবিলাম প্রাণারাম সাগরে!) But one thing was sadly missed during the songs—another lovely feature with him—his gentle claps, marking time with the flappings of his soul, soaring up, 'in tune with the Infinite'. He had no strength left for that!

Journey's
End

The Last
Flare Up

He tried to join in 'the recitals of the glories of Divine Mother (মাতৃ স্তোত্র)'; his voice had again begun to fail, and he gradually fell asleep here at 2.30 p.m. which is new waking up to a new life. Immortality always surrounded him—Life in life, Life in death, Life after death! He was immersed in the depth of immortality even while he was here and he only cast off this

outer coil to find himself more intimate in the grip of the Spirit and in the company of the immortals.

Could we know him in his mortal life?—Life in spirit is inexhaustible and all-pervasive in its deep significance. As we grow in spirit, Pramathalal will grow in us and we shall grow in him, to know him more and more. May his soul have a new birth in us, to re-create us into the new life of his *Naba Sishu*—the New Dispensation, which is the Revelation of the Spirit and the abode of the Harmony and Peace for ever, amongst the happy family of spirits.

Ever Live
Pramathalal
& Grow
In Spirit

APPENDIX

Prayerful Reverence : Extracts From 'In Memoram'

Prof. Satyendra Nath Roy, M.Sc., M.A.—Lucknow

Our 'Naloo-da',—yes, I have heard his own nephews calling him by that affectionate title. For love of Keshab and his message, both the brothers Nalooda and Bhuluda, left their all and became ascetics, and like ancient Brahmachari Sannyasis of Ind and the Catholic Fathers of Christendom, took the vow of celibacy and lived a dedicated life. My thought goes back to Naloo and Bhuloo; and I wonder if I would not give a higher place to these than to Keshab. For I am sure that Keshab himself, emptied of his 'self', would rejoice most over it.

The New Dispensation stands for first the "Dispensation of God", and then for the "Continuity in Dispensation". It means to me, growth to infinity—simultaneously in *Jnana*, *Karma*, *Bhakti* and *Yoga*, in this life and hereafter. It means to me identity with God in *Ichha-yogo*—the union of will—and identity with God and Man simultaneously. "Thou, I and mankind, all in one love intoxicated, shall form one Undivided Spiritual Unit." And Pramathalal's favourite text was—"He is honey unto us, we are honey unto him; may we be honey unto each other".

Pramathalal was the great scholar in the Brahmo Samaj, combining with his studies the rare insight of the "Child Spirit". But the scholarship was masked in humility and I shall always remember the glee with which he told you about his being taken for an 'idiot'!

And to unostentatious, silent, steadfast work, every Institution in the *Mandali* will bear testimony. To all these he was intimately associated. A couple of lines in pencil from him brought more money for the causes

than most, attractive printed appeals. And into these causes, he jumped in with the same George Muller spirit that Pandit Shiva Nath Sastri saw in Keshab.

And the eternal Utsav of his! It was a terror for us!! Ah, but the joy of it? Sweet colloquies with God, working up every personality in the family, every occurrence in the city, every event of a national history into a vision of God's dispensation,—into the utterance, action and bidding of the Mother Divine!

Unique was his communion with those outside the *mandali*. His was a spontaneous love and reverence for ideals,—even if partial ideals, realised in life, that needs must be synthetised in the "One Religion" of Nabavidhan. Long before the son of Maharshi Devendra Nath of the Brahmo Somaj became the Nobel Laureate, he was ordering me to translate the hymns of Tagore into English for the Westerners. And you may be, also, the smallest of the small and the world may jeer at you, —but he will say,—"Listen to what Nadan says!"

I am sure the present atrocities of the government hastened his death. Loyalty was a creed with Pramathalal, but the basis of that was good government and the Christian speeding up of all forms of reform,—and not the reverse of it.

Providence in history? Who believed it more than Pramathalal, after Keshab? To such a one, injustice and corruption in government is a great shock. As the Belgians at Antwerp cried out.—"Where are the English?"—when the shells of the Germans alighted on their gun-carriages, so cried Pramathalal from his death-bed: "Where are the Missionaries?"—when the lathis of the British police made the heads of passive resisters,—women and children, bleed. "Has Christ forsaken the Church also?"—cried he, and sat up on bed in anguish and pain.

Aye, Christian missionaries, paid millions from Indian revenue, may forsake Christ, but not heathen Pramathalal,—the *Ashiq* of the Nava Sishu of Naba Vidhan. Will not his faith in every British official being

a missionary of Christ, put to shame such officials and official missionaries and make them Christian and hark the doctrine of God's dispensation in history. This Pramathalal tried to preach to an unbelieving world, to make it believable throughout the continent of India.

A Leader par-excellence he was, but when ever did he lead? His commands were never in the imperative, but mild hints in the affirmative or interrogative mood and invariably in the passive form.

Nalooda's removal really brought him closer to our heart and we now know what he liked, for he liked what God liked. The 'being' it and the 'doing' it shall be the memorial unto Pramathalal. Thou *bhaktadhin Bhagavan* of Nababidhan! Make us understand his, who poured himself out for us, to enrich us with the wealth of his life.

Prof. Kharga Singha Ghosh, M.A.—Hazaribagh

"Every object of love is a centre of Paradise",—with these words of Novalis, Naluda concluded his last letter to me. What a world of meaning in the simple word! *Jivan-mukta* as he was, while in this world, is surely so, when out of this world. What great void has been created here, when that great living centre of faith, love and joy has been shifted elsewhere. We knew what faith means, what utter abandon to the spirit of God implies, when we came in touch with this noble soul. Naluda has taught me with a fresh emphasis, that the unseen world is terribly real. "Never doubt the eternal verity of the great beyond, that is within"—I often pondered over these noble words of Schliermacher, that nothing is so mysterious and nothing also so certain as the unseen world. I did not realise their full significance till I sat at the feet of Nalooda.

Inspite of all outward polish and a dubious complacency, this age is sad at heart. It feels inspite of plenty in its hands, there is a great void in its heart. In

spite of all acquisitions, it feels that the verities that alone matter are somehow slipping out of its grasp. It, therefore, pays a secret but a sure homage to a man of faith. This accounts for the love and esteem which was spontaneously bestowed on him by his beloved community. His life was to me a vindication of the great truth that Goethe taught in his 'Wilhelme, that reverence' and worship opens out a new pathway to Reality. We all knew with what steady steps he trod this path and what realisation was his as a matter of course. He would not taste the joys of Heaven, unless even the meanest of his associates partook of them. He taught us with a renewed emphasis from day to day, that worship and the realisation are co-operative concerns. The more we meet at the feet of the Mother, the sweeter She is.

With Nalooda, passes away from the Brahma Somaj, one who showed us what naturalness of spiritual worship means, one whose whole life was an undying Utsav, one who is calling us to sit as one body with diverse limbs, at the feet of the Mother. From the great unseen, at this hour of encircling gloom, may his spirit console, cheer and inspire us today, when we are in dire need of his ministrations in our desolation !

Principal D. N. Sen—Patna

When Keshab's great orb sank in the west, it left an afterglow behind it. Of that afterglow, Pramathalal was a serene ray. There are now very few left out of Keshab's immediate associates. He inherited to a degree, the calm and composed tranquillity of soul, the unobtrusive manners and the amiable disposition. No one was more beloved of his friends. His modesty was unique and almost amounted to a fault. It disarmed him for exercising that commanding influence, which is the soul of organisation. Pramathalal sacrificed himself truly on the altar of his mandali, immolated himself for the glory of God and the love of man. I cannot say that I

have met a simpler and sweeter, a more loving or lovable person. Some of the most precious and joyous moments of my life has been spent with him and in his intercourse,—and like a stream of molten gold, his gentleness has permeated the cracks and crevices of my stony life.

Some persons, saintly souls, have the peculiar power of unobtrusively entering into the depths of other people's lives. Pramathalal has sent down myriad roots of his spiritual power in to us and enriched our lives. Calm, quiet and unobtrusive as he was, he had a burning fire in the depths of his heart. This man of God impressed us as a member of the sacred Brotherhood, the *Sramanas*. Selfless, concentrated with an undisturbed joy in the deepest and most secret places of his nature, he always reminded me of Sree Buddha's great *Sangha*. His culture was fine and so much above vulgar garishness of everyday life, so finely sensitive to every elevating thought and sentiment, yet so strong and well-established in his faith and character.

Principal Lalit Mohan Chatterji,—Dacca

The last of the saints is gone! The God-minded, God-possessed man, always loved and trusted,—is no more! There is no one now to whom our young people can go to recover their shattered ideals. His whole life was a continuous 'practice of the presence of God'. Very often we found him humming,—Indeed no one ever made a deeper or holier use of our hymns, than did he. His heart was attuned to the music of Divine presence. "In our hymns, a new Bible",—he said.

To him, religion was not a mere philosophy or a mere sacred tradition of the past. It was a living force that filled past, present and future, that entered into and 'transfigured' all things. In all things he saw the triumph of God's saving and transforming love. 'Where?'—we

asked. In a thrilling tone he said : 'Here, there, everywhere'.

He made us feel that, when Reason had spoken its last word, a mystical speaker remained, whose word only Faith could grasp. It was with Him that he made us acquainted. It was to Him that he led us,—and in doing so, performed, what Carlyle tells us is the true function of the priest.

But if he practised the presence of God, he also practised divine love. He loved both those that were good and those that were not,—and he knew them to be 'not so good'. He gave himself to all without reservation,—he was for all. Few can love so divinely, but all can understand such love. He saw behind all faults, the throbbing, yearning heart. Never was a sweeter spiritual relation expressed, nor one more varied in its appeal, than in the dear name which the whole community gave him—*Nalooda*. By that name his memory will be enshrined in our hearts.

Many people love Keshab, but no one loved like him. Keshab was the greatest force in his life,—a deep, silent living force. This ever gave him a perennial freshness and nourished the roots of faith and hope and of asceticism. On a blank leaf of his own copy of the ministers's "Prayers" he wrote, quoting from Keshab.—"This is my Jerusalem my Mecca, this is my Brindaban'."

So was the Nabavidhan a living faith with him ; not a matter of history, not a matter of philosophy, not a matter of formal observances,—but a living, growing, deathless force. God had descended—not in one heart but in all hearts. The drama of human salvation had been set upon the stage. The stage was the whole world and all history. We were only in the first act. He did not believe in a Nabavidhan that was finished and done with. He did not sigh for the vanished past. To him, the present was as sacred as the future.

May the odour of sanctity and love that filled his life, linger in the bereaved community.

Rewachand Mirchandani—Karachi

Men of Pramathalal's type, by the transparency of their character draw many to themselves, and together they march to the throne of the most High. Only when we miss him, we realize the grandeur of what he stood for.

God's men who always live in His presence and whose walks and talks are all inspired by Him,—make a direct appeal to the hearts. And such a one was Pramathalal. His very face showed that he was living in the presence of the Divine Mother and the light that radiated from his countenance and beamed forth from his eyes, was sufficient to illumine others. In his words there was a magic, a thrill, and their reverberations echoed in the hearts of his listeners. His silence was sometimes more eloquent. Silent Pastors are an institution in themselves. Methinks, I can still hear him. The torrent of his words so eloquently spoken and so truly uttered, was such as to drown all worldliness and give one the true happiness of being in the presence of the Loving and Living God.

I can vividly recall to my mind his Upashana on top Pir Pahar at Monghyr, on one Christmas day. We could easily realise how the ancient Rishis seated on the tops of mountains, communed with the Creator. The silently flowing water of the Ganges, the green fields and meadows visible at distances, and sweet chirping of the birds in the air, all enraptured the soul and there was the spontaneous out-pouring of the heart of a devotee—Pramathalal. The ills of the world were forgotten and the Maker of the universe shone out in all its magnificent glory, in nature round about and in the soul within. Joining Nalooda in his Aradhana, we could have got a clear realisation of the Holy Spirit.

He lived the whole of his life in the presence of his Creator and was truly a God-intoxicated man. He was Navabidhan made into flesh. Though not visible to our physical eyes, he is yet living the *Hari Darbar*,—holding

Kirtan, singing the beautiful name of God and dancing in ecstasy. No public fame and popular applause greeted him, he was yet the hero of the Nababidhan. It is men of his type who by plain-living and high-thinking and living upto its ideals, help to establish the Kingdom of God on earth and serve as a beacon light on the road to truth and piety. May he inspire us to dedicate our lives to the cause of God and humanity and to lead a life of purity and serene Bhakti, even as this Brahmachari did. Amen !

Mr. Hemanandan—Karachi

In 1917, on the first Sunday evening after my arrival at Calcutta, I ventured alone to the place of my pilgrimage,—the Bharatvarshiya Brahmo Mandir. I took my seat and then began to gaze intently upon the face of the person conducting the Upashana. He was an impressive personality, and my heart at once went out to him. The Upashana was in Bengalee, a language little understood by me at that time. But it indicated clearly the sincerity of the pious soul—‘in tune with the Infinite’. I could feel the sanctifying spirit of the words uttered, as they were from the very heart.

The Upashana over, I came to understand that Revered Pramatha Lal Sen, brother of our *Babuji* (Nandalal) was on the pulpit. With certain feelings of nervousness and awe, natural to a stranger, I approached to touch his feet. He greeted me so kindly and talked with me in such a genial manner, as if he had known me for years.

In the annual Maghotsav celebration, I had another occasion to join his Upashana,—the outpouring of his heart. Even at the *Pritibhojan*, as at other functions, Rev. Sen was the central figure of the occasion. There I knew more of his inner loving nature. His ever-smiling face, his child-like simplicity and natural gentleness seemed to have won the heart of every one of us around him.

His residence was an *Ashram*, a study as well as a sanctuary with a library of books and a group of loving friends around him. Busy with his writings,—one could easily perceive there that he led an active life of a highly intellectual person. With all his deep learning, there was nothing artificial in his nature.

Here was a great man, living a simple and quiet life. He was like a Rishi of old,—not in jungles nor in mountain caves, but in the very heart of the 'City of Palaces', amidst the din and confusion of its every day humdrum life. He was there, appointed by Providence, to scatter seeds of love, of piety, of divinity among his fellow men, so that they may grow and spread the Divine fragrance of New Dispensation in their daily walks of life.

Gurudayal Mallik—Lahore

Pramathalal's was one of those faces which are so clear-cut in their contour that ever since I looked upon it, I have carried it in the gallery of my heart. It is creative in its expression, as well as in its aspect. A halo of humility invests the countenance with an ineffable charm. It has a lightness of touch about it, a certain delicacy like that of the lotus springing out of the slime.

But sometimes the perspective of my vision changes. I think of him as the babe, who is being rocked in the cradle, firm in the faith that it is the ever outstretched supporting arms of the Mother.

Rightly or wrongly, I have always thought of Pramathalal as a *bawl* in the glory of the unconscious, blissfully oblivious of his separative existence; he was like the fish in the deep sea. One with life in this outlook and idealism as in his inspiration, he was a universalist.

Pramathalal is not dead. He has only moved into another room in the Mansion of the Mother. We can still hear the silent tread of his steps,—the tread which

had in it the measure of a melody and the softness of an intimate companionship.

Prof. Behari Lal Anand—Simla

Profound and pensive, yet simple and childlike ! Those who knew you as a scholar and gifted writer, knew you not. Those who knew you as our representative at the world's League of Religions, knew you not. Those who knew you as a sanyasi, leading a life of renunciation, or even as the rallying centre of the young and old, knew you not. You were all these and yet more than these—a *bhakta*, devout and ardent, rejoicing in loving and living communion with the Common Father of all. Your prayers, sweet and real, were your meat and drink, the sole sustenance of your life. You had come to fill the whole environment,—nay, our very lives,—with your holy life.

Our revered *Nalooda*, we will not see you again with these eyes. But a man of prayer as you were, you are asking the desolate sorrowing believers in your Faith, to find you out through our prayers.

Benoyendra Nath Sen

Benoyendra Nath Sen

Benoyendranath was born in Calcutta on 25th September, 1868. He comes from a respectable family of Tribeni, a place of pilgrimage on the right bank of the Ganges, about 7 miles from Calcutta. The village was a seat of great Sanskrit culture,—Pandit Jagadish Tarkapanchanan being a close neighbour of the family. Their ancestral house is still there, located in the midst of an extensive orchard—mainly of mango trees. Benoyendranath's grandfather, Ram Ratan Sen was a clerk in the Bengal Bank, later the Imperial Bank of India. He made a fortune as a broker dealing mainly in Government securities, but at the time of the Sepoy Mutiny, he lost heavily and the family was reduced to poverty.

Early Life
& Family

Benoyendranath's father, Madhusudan Sen was then studying in the Engineering College. The sudden change of economic status was a rude shock to the grandfather. He died of heart-failure. Madhusudan had to accept a Junior post in the Cash Department of his father's Bank. In those days, the communication between Tribeni and Calcutta was not good and Madhusudan had to undergo lot of strain everyday, in attending the office.

Father :
Madhusudan-
The Prayer-
ful.

Under the magic influence of Brahmananda Keshab Chandra Sen, Madhusudan was attracted towards the Brahmo Samaj and given *Diksha* in the new Faith, by Maharshi Debendra Nath Tagore. He led a prayer-ful life all through, with an unflinching faith in the kind Dispensation of Providence (কাঙালের ঠাকুর) manifested towards His humble and lowly devotee. His moving prayers from the Bharatvarshiya Brahmo Mandir benches, at the close of the morning *Upashana* of the main *Utsav* day, had almost become an integral part of the programme itself, year after year. Through the force of prayers and intense faith, Madhusudan developed almost

a passion for purity and through his ardent devotion, a high moral atmosphere prevailed in the family. This enabled him to fight successfully against heavy odds in his life. He left the world on 10th December, 1909.

Mother :
Mangala
Debi :
Brahma-
nanda's Fa-
vourite
Cousin

Benoyendranath's mother, Mangala Devi was the only daughter of Sree Sarada Prasanna Roy, belonging to a respectable Baidya family of Garifa, on the Ganges on the opposite side of Tribeni. She was the sister of four brothers, all very highly placed in life,—the eldest being Dr. Tara Prasanna Roy, who was the first Indian to hold the coveted post of the 'Chemical Examiner to the Government of Bengal'. She was a cousin of Brahmananda Keshab Chandra Sen and was a close neighbour of the latter at Colootola. She was also Brahmananda's favourite from her childhood, as we find from the following incident in her life. Over some domestic affairs, Mangala Debi presumed that she had incurred Keshabchandra's displeasure and she was feeling unhappy as she could not invite her cousin on a happy occasion in the family. But Keshabchandra surprised everybody by appearing on the scene uninvited, with a basket-ful of sweets and a beautiful Sari in his hand. Holding her by the arm, he said, "Ah, Mangala ! How could you forget me ?" At this, Mangala Debi burst into tears and could only be consoled when she was clasped in Keshabchandra's bosom and her tears were wiped away by his loving hand. Hereafter, there was no trace of family unhappiness. By Keshabchandra's arrangement, Mangala Debi's three school-going daughters used to accompany his own daughters to their school, in his carriage, for some time.

Such was Keshabchandra's affection for Mangala Debi. No wonder, Mangala Debi was so devoted to her husband, who was an ardent and faithful disciple of Keshabchandra, all his life. Mangala Debi died on 10th April, 1919, at the age of sixty-two. For nearly half a century of her earthly life, she never missed her daily *Upashana*—for the first forty years sitting by her husband's side in person and during the last ten years

in his spiritual company. Between the two devoted souls, they built up an ideal family, which won the admiration of all and which was cited by people as Keshab's 'Happy Family' (ভগবদাশ্রিত সুখী-পরিবার). They had six sons and five daughters, who were brought up in an atmosphere of faith, purity, high culture and sublime dignity,—all its own. Benoyendranath was the eldest son and the second child. His two grandfathers—both on the paternal and the maternal sides, were of religious temperament and they sometimes passed whole nights on Meditations and Sadhans.

**Keshab's
'Sukhi-Paribar':
Faith, Purity,
Culture:
Family Tradition**

We can have a beautiful picture of Benoyendranath's early life, from the short sketch by his second sister, Sreemati Sarala Debi, published in the Dharmatattwa of 1913, after his death. Following is the extract of a portion of it—

দুর্গোৎসবের নবমী পূজার দিন, যে মহানগরীতে সার্বজনীন মুক্তিপ্রদ ব্রাহ্মধর্ম অবতীর্ণ হন, সেখানে কলুটোলার প্রসিদ্ধ সেন পরিবারের অট্টালিকার সন্নিকটে এক ব্রহ্মনিষ্ঠ গৃহস্থ-সাধকের ক্ষুদ্র গৃহে, এই ধর্ম-বীর জন্মগ্রহণ করেন।

কে জানিত এই শিশু ভবিষ্যতে ব্রহ্মানন্দের জীবনকে আদর্শ করিয়া ও পিতা মাতার প্রার্থনা-ধনের অধিকারী হইয়া, তাঁহাদেরই শিক্ষা-দীক্ষায় সুন্দর ধর্ম-জীবন গড়িয়া তুলিবেন ও তাঁহাদের মুখোজ্জ্বল করিবেন?

দাদা যে সময় জন্মগ্রহণ করেন, তাঁহার চতুর্দিকে স্বর্গের পবিত্র সমীরণ সঞ্চারিত, পূণ্যবারি অবিশ্রাম প্রবাহিত। শুরুর-পক্ষীয় শশী-কলার ন্যায় শিশু পরমসুন্দর হইয়া দিনে দিনে বর্দ্ধিত হইতে লাগিলেন। শিশুর লাভগ্যভরা সৌন্দর্য্যে দরিদ্র-কুটির আলোকিত হইতে লাগিল। তাঁহার অঙ্গসৌষ্ঠব ও মুখশ্রী সকলেরই মনোহরণ করিত। মাতৃদেবীর নিকট শুনিয়াছি, গৃহের পরিচারিকা একদিন পঞ্চম-বর্ষীয় বালকের দেহ মুছাইয়া দিতে দিতে, হঠাৎ মাকে

ডাকিয়া বলিয়া উঠিল—“ও দিদি ! এ ছেলে তোমার সামান্য মানুষ নয়; স্বর্গ থেকে কোনও দেবতা তোমার কোলে নেমে এসেছে গো।” না জানি, সেই সাধারণ পরিচারিকাও দাদার মুখে কি এক স্বর্গীর জ্যোতি দেখিতে পাইয়াছিল। এই দাসী, ১৪ বৎসর আমাদের বাড়ীতে ছিল এবং দাদার যত্ন করিত। তৎপূর্বে এই দাসী কলুটোলার সেন পরিবারে কাজ করিত। ব্রহ্মানন্দের জ্যেষ্ঠ পুত্র করুণা কুমারের (ডাকনাম শুকো) যত্ন করিত,—তাই নাম হইয়াছিল—“শুকোর ঝি।”

বাল্যকাল হইতেই দাদা পরিষ্কার পরিচ্ছন্নতা বড়ই ভাল-বাসিতেন। তাঁর সুসজ্জিত ঘরখানি একটি পবিত্র দেব-মন্দির মনে হইত। দাদা চিরকাল অত্যন্ত আত্ম-নির্ভরশীল ছিলেন। তাঁর বিছানা, কাপড়, বই সবই স্বহস্তে সর্বদা পরিষ্কার পরিচ্ছন্ন সুন্দর-ভাবে গুছাইয়া রাখিতেন। তাঁর এই গুণটি আমাদের সকলেরই বিশেষ শিক্ষার বিষয় ছিল।

৭ বৎসর বয়সে, দাদার জীবনে একটি সঙ্কটময় পরীক্ষা উপস্থিত হয়। একদিন স্কুল হইতে ফেরার পর, পায়ে ব্যথা ও প্রবল জ্বরে আক্রান্ত হন। পিতামাতা মহা ব্যস্ত হইয়া পড়িলেন; তৎক্ষণাৎ চিকিৎসার ব্যবস্থা করা হইল। কিন্তু ক্রমেই রোগ বাড়িয়া, জীবন সংশয় হইয়া উঠিল। সুপ্রসিদ্ধ চিকিৎসকগণে গৃহ পূর্ণ,—কিন্তু রোগ নির্ণয় আর হয় না। আমাদের স্নেহময় বড়মামা ছিলেন একজন উচ্চ-পদস্থ সরকারী ডাক্তার (পরে কেমিক্যাল একজামিনার হন) সে কারণে বিচক্ষণ ডাক্তারের কোনও অভাব হয় নাই, কিন্তু সকলেই নিরাশ হইয়া পড়িলেন। অসুখ ধরা পড়িতেছে না। অবশেষে দেখা গেল পায়ের ভিতর পাকিয়াছে; তখনই অস্ত্র করা হইল। কিন্তু কোনও সুফল হইল না। চিকিৎসকগণ নিরাশ হইয়া ফিরিয়া গেলেন। তাঁহাদের মুখে নিষ্ঠুর হৃদয়ভেদী ‘হোপ-লেস’ কথাটি শুনিয়া, বাবা মা বজ্রাহতের স্থায় স্তব্ধ হইয়া গেলেন। কিন্তু তখনও

তাহারা দয়াময় ভগবানের অনন্ত করুণার উপর একান্ত নির্ভর রাখিয়া, চিকিৎসকগণ তাঁহাদের প্রবোধার্থে যে শেষ ঔষধ (প্রেস-ক্রিপসন) করিয়াছিলেন, তাহা তৈয়ারী করিয়া আনিতে ঝিকে দোকানে পাঠাইলেন। পশ্চিমধ্যে তাহাকে দেখিয়া ডাক্তারমামা বলিলেন—“শুকোর মা, আর ঔষধে কি হইবে?” কিন্তু ভগবান যে জীবন দ্বারা তাঁহার মহিমা গৌরব প্রকাশিত করিবেন ইচ্ছা করিয়াছেন, তাহাকে ঘোর বিপদের মধ্যেও রক্ষা করেন। দাদা ধীরে ধীরে সুস্থ হইয়া উঠিলেন। নব-স্বাস্থ্য লাভ করিয়া পড়াশুনা আরম্ভ করিলেন। মার মুখে শুনিয়াছি, জীবনের যখন কোনও আশা নাই, আমাদের বৃদ্ধ মাতামহদেব অতি প্রত্যায়ে কাহাকেও কিছু না বলিয়া আপন-গৃহ ত্যাগ করিয়া কোথায় চলিয়া গিয়াছিলেন। সন্ধ্যার পূর্বে গৃহে ফিরিয়া হাসিমুখে বলিলেন, “ও মঙ্গলা, কোনও ভয় নাই। মার দয়ায় বিন ভাল হবে। ওকে এখন শানে আছড়ালেও ওর কিছু হবে না।” জানিনা তিনি কোথায় গিয়া কঠোর তপস্যায় আশীর্বাদ লাভ করিয়া, মাকে এই মহা অভয়-বাণী শুনাইলেন। ক্রমে সেই জীবন একটি ফুটন্ত গোলাপ ফুলের ন্যায় অপরূপ সৌন্দর্য্যে বিকসিত হইয়া সকলকে মুগ্ধ করিল।

Benoyendranath started his education in the infant class of the Tribeni School. The parents in their spare time, helped him in his studies. When he was seven, the family shifted to Calcutta and Benoyendranath was admitted into the Albert Institute, which was started by Keshabchandra and later left in charge of his brother, Krishna Behary Sen as Rector. Benoyendranath was a brilliant student, always standing first in his class. He had a charming way of moving about among his classmates and would be ever ready to help them, and he was the leading spirit among them. Some of them would be found accompanying him to his residence, after the school hours and sharing with him the frugal tiffin, which his mother could provide with the small means at her disposal.

Early School
Life

Fine
Oratory

While a school-boy, Benoyendranath used to gather round him his friends and hold meetings in their debating clubs. He was always one of the speakers, if not the only one. Any suitable vacant piece of land, either in the school compound or the by-lanes near his house would serve as a venue. The Young audience used to be awe-struck with Benoyendranath's wonderful eloquence, in full musical voice and flowery language, marked by deep sentiments, clear thoughts and a graceful modulation of voice,—all his own. He was in fact, a prodigy and was regarded by them as a future hero of the Town-Hall.

Future Hero
of the Halls

On one such occasion, his maternal uncle, Rai Bahadur Dr. Taraprasanna Roy, overhearing his oration, rushed to his sister and exclaimed,—“Ah Mangala! Bino would be a pride of the family, some of these days. He would lecture before gatherings of thousands in the Town-Hall and the hall would burst with applause” (দেখিস, বিনো দশহাজার লোকের সামনে, লেকচার দিয়ে টাউনহল কাটাবে). The uncle's prediction came true and his dear ‘Bino’ did enchant thousands of his appreciative gatherings by his ‘lectures’,—not only here, but across the oceans as well.

The Friend's
Athenaum :
An Extra-
ordinary
Boy

The ‘Friend's Atheneum’—a club for the intellectual development for young boys, was started by him in the school,—he being the Secretary. The Rector Krishnabehary often presided and selected the subject for debate. Benoyendranath's speeches were of such a high order, that some of his friends suspected that these had been borrowed from others and gave Benoyendranath only the credit for good delivery and a sharp memory. Even the Rector had once some such idea. But soon he found out his mistake and had to admire Benoyendranath as an extraordinary boy and felt extremely sorry for doubts. Benoyendranath's lecture on “Freedom and Slavery”, when he was only fourteen—was a revelation to Krishnabehary. The first anniversary of the club was held with due *eclat*—Rishi Pratapchandra presiding.

Sj. Nagendra Chandra Mitra, although senior to him, was friendly and helped Benoyendranath in organising the ceremony. On the occasion of the anniversary of the Prayer Meeting, at the age of 15, his sermon was on a surprisingly serious subject—'The Broken Heart' (ভগ্ন-হৃদয়). In this, he said that the gentle breeze of the Grace of God could not enter into our heart, unless a vacuum and opening were there by blast and blows of Heaven (হৃদয় না ভাঙিলে, প্রাণ শূন্য না হইলে,—তাহার ভিতর ভগবৎ-কৃপা প্রবেশ করিতে পারে না). This philosophical poetic dictum from young Benoyendranath, was long remembered by his friends.

Benoyendranath had a healthy mind in a healthy body. He took an active interest in sports, specially cricket. But evening-walks were his favourite exercise, when his group of friends would join him. Love of nature would draw them to some quiet place and there they would sit together and pray. These, as early as in 1879, when Benoyendranath was only eleven, may be taken as the inception of their dear Prayer Meetings.

Love of
Nature :
Prayer
Meeting

Benoyendranath was highly intellectual and bright but his aspiration from his early days was the development of spiritual life. The time and environmental factors were favourable and did help him in this. Keshab-chandra's ideals and the father's prayer-ful life filled his soul with the spirit of prayer. His family tradition was also helpful—both his grandfathers being men of religion.

The religious atmosphere of the *Mandali* and the revivalist spirit of the age, did contribute a lot to develop his spiritual life. Every morning after his bath, he would engage himself in *upashana* and this became a regular habit with him from his early boy-hood. The history of the growth of his dear Prayer Meeting (started in 1879) with which the development of his own spiritual life, is so intimately connected, is in the first chapter of this book—'The Trio Pilgrims'. His friends wondered how clearly Benoyendranath, even at such a

Surroundings
Favourable
for Spiritual
Growth

tender age, could delineate all the *Swarups* in the *Aradhana*. His prayers were fervent, coming straight from the heart—with a grace, all its own. His friends used to say that by Prayer alone, he developed his mind and soul.

Although engaged in many extra-curricular activities, particularly his long evening outings for prayer, Benoyendranath stood fourth in the Entrance Examination, in 1884 and won a Senior-Grade Scholarship of Rupees Twenty per month. It surprised everybody, as he was never very keen over the text-books, being more concerned about the growth of his spiritual self and development of his general knowledge and culture.

But he was a highly talented boy, a real genius. After such a brilliant result, every one thought that he would join the Presidency College. But he could not think of leaving his own dear Institution. His friends, who did well in the examination, also followed suit and joined the Albert College,—Benoyendranath's charming company being the chief attraction.

Benoyendranath in his early college-days would write out in his beautiful hand-writing in a magazine form, all his thoughts that he could call up and gather together during the month. Thus he grew in mind and spirit and at the same time, grew to be a powerful speaker and writer. He had natural gifts about these undoubtedly, but developed a style of his own, both in writing and speaking, by his regular endeavours through his manuscript magazines, which he named—'The Comet' and 'The Morning Star'.

But his depth of thoughts came from the devotional exercises in the Prayer Meeting. His writings even then, breathed a spirit of sweetness and urbanity, freshness, originality, broadness of outlook and a penetrating insight,—charged as it was with light from all spiritual sources. Because of his keen hankering for a general up-lift of his mind and soul, he would pay more attention to really good books, than confine himself to mere text-books. Even when studying for his First Arts

Entrance
(Matriculation) :
1884
A Genius

Manuscript
Journal :
The Comet &
The Morning
Star

Devotional
Exercises in
Prayer
Meeting
Light from
all Spiritual
Sources

Examination, he read some of the philosophical text books for the B. A. curriculum, such as—works of Newman, Emerson, Ruskin, Hamilton, Theodore Parker, Channing, Carlyle and others.

Prof. Newman's writings impressed Benoyendranath very much. For his 'Inspiration doctrine', Prof. Newman is sometimes mistaken for a Pantheist. But his 'Theory of Conscience'—the voice of God in the heart (as defined by Parkar's mother to her son) explains Intuitions or Suggestions, as something that comes with an inviolable authority. It is the self-revelation of the Absolute. There is a distinction between the Absolute and the Conditioned in man,—though both are organically related in one Life-Movement. Thus, Newman cannot be regarded as a Pantheist. He is the harbinger of modern Humanism. Man, with God at the centre as his Being—the Inspiring and Inspirating and Re-creative Principle. Conscience is enthroned in the heart as the Moral Governor of every man and in the one man—Humanity, to work himself out under the conditions of Time. Conscience as it regulates the life, is also the rod to the erring and sin-ful and also the blessedness of Self-realization for the loving and self-sacrificing spirit for the good of humanity. The Theory of Conscience has brought about a revolution in the Brahmo Samaj movement, which is no longer a mere field for intellectual pursuits or spiritual endeavours. It became the movement of whole life, as conscience has in its ambit all actions, high and low, great and small. *Nityanitya Bichar* may correspond to conscience, if it means true knowledge coming from the Absolute, in its self-revelation in the heart of man.

**Theory of
Conscience
Absolute in
Its Self-
Revelation**

Apart from the philosophical ideas developed from such an early age, Benoyendranath's studies in general literatures, both Bengalee and English and also Sanskrit, were no less comprehensive. One wonders to find him even composing some Sanskrit verses in *Anustup* and *Mandakranta* rhymes, after Kalidasa's model. Benoyendranath would not be satisfied with mere study of the books,

**Studies and
Discussions**

but he would have regular discussions on their truths with others, to brush up his own knowledge, as well as to help his class-mates in realising those.

On one occasion, when just a first-year college student, he with his companions attended a debate meeting of senior students, presided over by Sir Gurudas Banerjee. Hard-pressed by his friends, he stood up and spoke on the subject before the meeting, without any previous preparation whatsoever. After Benoyendranath had finished his speech, Sir Gurudas was very pleased and was surprised when he learnt that Benoyendranath was only a junior college student. He called Benoyendranath affectionately to him and congratulated him on his fine speech. He was attracted by Benoyendranath's bearing and was struck by his depth of knowledge and forceful delivery, such as he could never expect from a mere boy. Sir Gurudas regarded Benoyendranath as a prodigy, but what impressed him more deeply was Benoyendranath's gentle modesty and beautiful dignity.

**Sir Gurudas's
Deep
Interest**

Sir Gurudas started from that date, to take a loving interest in Benoyendranath and the attachment between the two deepened till the last day of Benoyendranath's life. Almost on every occasion Benoyendranath addressed the students of the University Institute, either in social functions or sittings of debating societies, Sir Gurudas was his co-speaker. When the dignified name of Pratap-chandra's—'The Society for the Higher Training for Young Men', was proposed to be changed to the simpler one,—'The Calcutta University Institute', Sir Gurudas was the lonely figure on Benoyendranath's side, in his vigorous protest against the change. Sir Gurudas was several years' Benoyendranath's senior, having been his father's friend in the Hare School. The kin-ship of spirit between the two, despite the great disparity of age, is surprising and the relation between the two gradually turned more as between two friends. The high regard Sir Gurudas had for Benoyendranath, indicates his innate goodness and Benoyendranath's charming nature through his high moral character.

While on the subject of attachment between the two, an episode in the friendly relations between them, comes to our mind. King George V and Queen Mary came to Calcutta in 1911 and both Sir Gurudas and Benoyendranath were amongst the members of the delegation that was to wait upon them, on behalf of the University. Sir Gurudas, on his way back home from the University Institute, sometimes used to bring Benoyendranath along with him in his carriage and drop him at his house. On the evening before the delegation, when Benoyendranath got down from the carriage, Sir Gurudas followed him and then clasping Benoyendranath's hand, said in all gentleness and humility—"Benoyendra Babu, I have ordered for a Landau and a pair from M/s Hart Brothers, for tomorrow's visit to the Government House. You have no conveyance,—so kindly allow me the privilege of giving you a lift and the pleasure of your company". Such was the loving yet respectful feeling of Sir Gurudas towards Benoyendranath.

Sir
Gurudas :
Privilege
and
Pleasure

Benoyendranath passed his First Arts Examination in 1886 and was placed quite high up, but did not win a Scholarship. He joined the General Assembly's Institution, afterwards amalgamated with the Free Church College, to form the present Scottish Churches College.

First Arts
1886

While in the Third-year Class of the College, he competed with the boys of the higher classes and won the first prize for Theological studies. In 1888, he passed the B. A. Examination, with first class honours in English and Philosophy and was appointed, on the strong recommendation of his Principal, as a teacher of English and History in the Mission Society's Institute, where he worked for about 2 years. Benoyendranath was naturally shy and at first hesitated to apply for the post, as he had no experience. His Principal however, encouraged him and remarked that he would do better than many, who mainly based their teaching on Prof. P. K. Lahiri's notes alone.

Graduates
with
Honours :
1888.

The general principle of his life was never to seek money, but to accept it as God's blessings, if it would

Teacher :
True Mis-
sionary
Spirit

come of itself. The teaching job did help him in providing higher education for his brothers, but he did not feel tempted by the offer of the attractive Executive Service. He took up the teaching line not as a mere vocation, but in a true missionary spirit of self-less Social Service. The growing moral degeneration amongst the students pained him much. Teaching was to him, a more sacred Trust than Preaching, which at one time he regarded as the mission of his life. He could not afford to be keen on a State Scholarship for higher studies in England, for family reasons.

After graduating, he studied both History and Philosophy for his M.A. as a private student, while working as a teacher. Although he had to deprive himself of the advantages of college lectures for family reasons, he read for hours every day in the college library, through the kind permission of the Principal. He used to borrow the necessary books from it and prepare his notes on them, before returning. Both Benoyendranath and his next brother, Satyendranath were vegetarians from their early days. We have it from their sister Sarala Debi, that they had to go to their colleges, after taking rice with only some vegetables. The mother cooked so well, that the simple dish (কচুৰণ্ট) was transformed into (অমৃতবণ্ট) a delicacy.

Master's
Degree as
Private
Student
while
Teaching :
Yet First in
First Class
1889

He came out first in the first class, in History and there were only two other successful candidates that year, and those two were placed only in the third class. It was indeed highly creditable for a private student and shows the metal he was made of. The result may be considered really 'brilliant', when we remember that he was getting ready to appear in Philosophy first and History was his choice for the next year. But he changed his mind almost at the eleventh hour and took up the subjects in a reverse order.

After getting his Master's degree, he accepted the post of the Head Master of Berhampur Collegiate School and was in the midst of a galaxy of intellectuals.

Dr. Brajendra Nath Seal was the Principal of the College. Mohitchandra was the Professor of Philosophy and Lalit Mohan Chatterjee, the Professor of English. Prof. Hiralal Halder, Pandit Janaki Nath Bhattacharjee, Prof. Sashi Bhusan Dutta, Prof. A. H. Wheeler were also in the College, at that time.

**Head Master
at Berham-
pur, 1889 :
Galaxy of
Intellectuals**

At Berhampur, Benoyendranath was putting up with his cousin and her husband, Khetra Mohan Sen, Translator and Nazir of the court, who, while at Calcutta, was an enthusiastic member of the Prayer Meeting Band. After Mohitchandra's arrival at Berhampur, he and Benoyendranath had a separate residence for them and lived together. They had thus the unique opportunity of thoroughly enjoying each other's company and living in the bliss-ful communion of souls. Between Khetramohon, Benoyendranath and Mohitchandra—they re-started their Prayer Meeting at Berhampur. They and their friends thus continued to live, as in Calcutta, in an atmosphere of prayer. In the Berhampur College cultural club, Benoyendranath read a paper on Browning and Principal Seal was struck with the illuminating paper, throwing almost a new light on life and its problems.

**Mohit-
chandra,
Khetra-
mohan and
Prayer
Meeting**

Benoyendranath's scope of life embraced almost all spheres. This culture gave him a stately bearing, with a nobility and purity of soul stamped on his features. Benoyendranath was held in high esteem by everybody at Berhampur and was a striking personality. Even when walking in the streets, he would evoke admiration from the eyes of the passers-by. And he too loved Berhampur and named it his dear 'Yarrow Visited'. A glow of spiritual dignity shone forth from his looks and invested him with freshness, sweetness and beauty in his every-day life. He woke up every morning,—lived and grew, in the ever-new spirit of all times.

**Broad Scope
of Life :
Culture :
Stately
Bearing**

Benoyendranath lived also in the spirit of transcendentalism in the great writers of the age. He was Emersonian in his spirit and in all his expression of higher life.

Benoyendranath was a lover of Nature. A devout student and ardent admirer of Wordsworth, he always had the poet's works in his voluminous pocket, whenever he went out on a Pilgrimage. It was however, Browning, who created in him a universe of ideas, far deeper and far more realistic than even the Platonic arche-typal systems of ideas. Browning would carry him into the innermost depth of the soul, which to Browning is the perennial spring of all light and life. From this depth would spring up a new light to invest everything far and near, with a new significance, not to be found outside, anywhere on earth and heaven. Benoyendranath's interpretations of Browning's poems in his papers and speeches were original and had nothing of the false glamour and verbosity of other critics. Tennyson was the next poet to charm him and among the literary men of the west, a selection of his favourites would be a long list, but next to Emerson, he was an ardent student of Ruskin and Carlyle. The latter's words—"A harmonious development of the being, is the first and the last object of true culture"—was one of the mottos of his life.

Steeped in
Study :
Oriental and
Occidental

Whatever might be the place he gave to Browning's idealism, Wordsworth's love for Nature, Tennyson's touching musical notes, and romanticism of Shelly and Keats, Benoyendranath would find himself in the greatest height of his being and the depth of his soul, when he lost himself in Rabindranath, the Upanisads and the Gita, to come out inspired, when he spoke on the noble teachings of the great Rishis.

The Poet
in Him

Benoyendranath was a man of prayer and faith and as his mental outfit he had more of the poet than anything else. He dived deep into the secret sources of wisdom of all ages and discovered the laws underlying and entered into the mysteries of nature, both within and without. He felt the compelling stirrings of the heart, through which the spirit moved him on, to find a companion of life,—through time and eternity. And he found one in his dear wife, putting on all the while, the spirit of her gifted husband—imbued with the deep spirit

of great devout self-consecration. Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barret Browning had their re-birth as it were, in this happy pair.

Benoyendranath had the gifts of charity, wisdom, purity of purpose and holiness of life. And the spirit of God led him on from light to light and movement to movement,—of all times and places. A devout student of History, as he was, he read the movements of the spirit in the light of the spirit itself and understood their inner significance in the histories and he read them all the while, with the heart of a poet. He said that Shakespeare alone can open out the eyes, to read properly the histories of England and Rome and for a real study of the history of Greece, their dramas were essential. True study of History should be with a broad mind and liberal spirit and Humanity should be living in different characters. History was to him not barren lands—dry as dust scattered over with the dead bones of the past, like Golgotha,—but a perennial spring of life. The bones by running into one another, form themselves into one whole and start into new life to tell their own stories in the great epic of life, or in the different dramas unfolding the one plan and purpose of creation.

Led by
Spirit of
God

History in
a New
Light

While working at Berhampur, Benoyendranath appeared for the M.A. Examination in Philosophy, as a private candidate and came out first, although in the second class. The paper on Vean's Logic stood in the way of his getting a first class. He then accepted the post of the Professor in the Bhagalpur Tej Narayan College. In everything he did, even in his lectures in the College classes, he was nothing if not fresh and original, in his ways of dealing with the subject. One day, when he was lecturing to his class, Dr. Martin, and Sir Alfred Croft while inspecting the College, happened to listen to his lectures. The latter was so much fascinated by his ways of dealing with the subject and his general bearings and talks, that as soon as he became the Director of Public Instructions, he offered Benoyendranath the post of the Professor of History in the Presidency College. Just at

Master in
Philosophy
while
Teaching :
Stands
First, 1890

Professor at
Bhagalpur :
1891

**Fascinated
Director
Snatches to
Presidency
College :
1893**

that time, a Wrangler was recommended from England for any vacancy there. When Benoyendranath came down to join the College, the Director had some difficulties to give him the offered appointment. But the Principal of the College himself took Benoyendranath to the History class, saying that so long as he was the Principal, there was no place for anybody else in that chair—be he a Wrangler or anything else. Fortunately, the Wrangler could be provided with a suitable post in the Hooghly College.

Benoyendranath joined the Presidency College in 1893 and was attached to it till his last days and his fame as an ideal Professor, may be considered to have started from that time. Teaching in those times did not strictly confine itself to any water-tight compartment of subjects. Although the full-fledged Professor of History, he had to lecture on Philosophy to the M.A. classes, also on Economics, Logic and Moral Philosophy. On special occasions, he was requested by the Principal to lecture even on English. And who would be more suited for the class, when Tennyson was the subject. Even in the First-year class, the whole College wanted to flock in, to listen to his lectures.

**Ideal
Educationist**

To Benoyendranath, education did not mean mere imparting of knowledge, but the moulding of character and carving out a perfect man-hood out of the plastic young minds in his charge. Impressive and expressive undoubtedly his lectures were, full of erudite scholarship,—but more important was that he put his whole soul in the job. The nobility of his character and his life in the spirit, elevated the students to a higher plain—intellectual, moral, spiritual and then led them to a richer and fuller life. His classes became store-houses of dynamic energy and his words so many electric sparks. He soon became very popular with his students. Even some of the boisterous students were turned to be quiet and all-attention in his classes—as if transformed at the touch of a magician's wand.

Benoyendranath was held in the highest esteem for

his bright intellect, and sturdy moral fibre. But his highly refined culture and deep spirituality, added further lustre to his person as teacher. As an ideal teacher, he was full of love and patient sympathy for all his students. He was a strict disciplinarian and could be very grave when the occasion demanded it, but nevertheless he loved his students and he was loved by them in return and regarded as their true 'Friend, Philosopher and Guide'.

**Loves
Students and
Loved.**

We have seen what a fine speaker Benoyendranath was, even from his early school-life. This gift of nature gradually developed with devotional exercises and consequent spiritual up-lift. A broad vision, deep insight into his subject, a sombre melodious voice, forceful eloquence, persuasive logic, poetic expressions flowing out from the depth of his heart, his humility and gentle bearing—all built up the fine speaker in him. But all these were the products of his fine culture, sincerity, high moral tone, religious back-ground and above all, of an 'abiding faith in the Supreme Spirit', which shone forth in whatever he said and did. This inspired his audience and carried them with him to a higher level.

**Both
Expressive
and
Impressive**

An ideal teacher as he was, Benoyendranath's gifts to his dear pupils, were not confined within the four walls of his class. The real value could be better appreciated outside his classes, and the real man in him would come out, when he freely mixed with them in their Social gatherings, Debating Societies, Geeta-classes etc. in the College, in the Y. M. C. A and mostly in the Calcutta University Institute. He would find a free and easy approach to their hearts in no time by his sweet temper, gentle nature and above all by his loving smiles and charming personality.

**Outside
Classes :
Real Man
shines**

His relations with the Calcutta University Institute, which was so dear to him from his early life till his journey's end, may be profitably taken up in some detail. It may be said that he literally dedicated his life to it. Earlier, we have seen Benoyendranath sitting at the feet of his spiritual father, Rishi Pratapchandra, when in 1890, the Institute first opened its door. Sir Gurudas, the

The Calcutta
University
Institute

first Indian Vice-Chancellor was its first President. Dr. Mahendra Lal Sarkar, Dr. P. K. Roy and the great Bankimchandra were the Sectional Presidents and Dr. Wilson was the first Secretary. Since its start, Benoyendranath was tied up with it in a bond of love. As early as 31st January, 1892, when he was at Bhagalpur, we find from his daily diary how happy he felt when he learnt about the Viceroy's interest in 'The Society for the Higher Training of Young Men'. Benoyendranath's connection with it started as an ordinary member and then he gradually became its Senior member in 1895, a member of the Executive Committee in 1898, the Deputy Secretary in 1900 and finally its Secretary in 1906. He was in this post till July 1912, when he retired, as he was absolutely bed-ridden; but it was not till he had finished all arrangements about its present palatial building.

Dedicates his
Life for its
New Life

The Institute then had a new life in his hand. It was housed in a corner of the Hindu school. He mixed freely with the junior members and with his affable personality, great zeal and hard labour,—he transformed it into a place of great attraction for the student community. The Study-Circles, Debating Societies, Library, Recitation and Essay Competitions, Social Gatherings, Sports (both indoor and out-door), Gymnasium, Rowing Club, Dramatic Performances,—all contributed to the hum of life that was a sure indication of its great popularity among the students. The membership rose within two years of his becoming the Secretary, from 65 to about ten times its former number and it was 730, when he retired. With the improved subscriptions and increased grants from the Government, it was rescued from a state of insolvency and raised to a flourishing condition.

Through the courtsey of the Governor, the members used to be invited to the Belvedere, where their annual Garden-parties with Sports were held. Mr. Gourlay, the Chief Secretary, who became Benoyendranath's friend, insisted on pairing Benoyendranath with Prof. S. C. Mahalanobis and made them join in a three-legged race.

It was a very amusing and enjoyable sight to find a dignified pair of professors, hopping towards the winning-post.

The Dramatic section of the University Institute was a novel feature, as it released an outlet for the expression of youthful energies in the development of histrionic art. It also marked a turning point in the history of the Bengalee stage—in dresses, in stage-craft, acting and other histrionic devices. Some of the Artistes—Prof. Sisir Kumar Bhadury, Prof. Naresh Chandra Mitra, S. J. Rabindra Roy and a few others, later made their mark on the Bengali stage. The others, Sreejuts Kanti Chandra Mukherjee, Jnanpriya Mitra, Harendra Nath Datta, Raghabendra Banerjee, Srish Chandra Chatterjee, Nagendra Nath Bose, Indu Bhusan Roy, Suresh Chandra Bose, Sushil Kumar Chatterjee and a host of them have shone in their respective future careers. And so also the Artists—Dr. Aghore Nath Ghose, Dr. Sunity Kumar Chatterjee and S. J. Girin Sen have earned their fame.

The Dramas

Benoyendranath's Geeta and Upanishad classes, his memorable lectures on the 'Holy Grail' and 'Apology of Socrates', 'Life of Budha', 'De Profundis', 'Tolerant Love'—opened up a new vista of his character.

His greatest achievement however, was to give the Institute a democratic constitution—delegating power to the junior-members in the management. Their minds were also turned towards social service and the 'Students Fund' was started to help indigent students in 1908. Benefit-performance of 'Ashoke-charit' was staged by the members in 1909. A high moral tone was developed through his influence in the atmosphere of the Institute. Some famous plays of Poets Girish Chandra and Dwijendra Lal were staged, but even book like 'The life of Budha', 'Jana' and 'Chandragupta', were not spared careful clipping when produced on the stage of the Institute under the supervision of Benoyendranath. Sir Gurudas also used sometimes to be present during the rehearsals. The books did not lose any of their charms

**Introduces
Democratic
Constitution :
High Moral
Tone**

through the pruning-knife, nor did Benoyendranath lose any of his popularity with the members of the Institute.

**Fraternal
Home : 1897
and Prayer
Meetings**

To have an abiding influence upon the minds of students for their up-lift and to set up a living ideal of higher life, Benoyendranath thought it necessary to come into closer contact with them. With this object in view, he gave up all the comforts of home-life and in June, 1897, he started a Home for college students and other young men, at 92, Harrison Road. It was named 'Fraternal Home', taking the cue from Keshabchandra's 'Good-Will Fraternity'. The best room,—a hall facing South was reserved for the 'Prayer Meeting', which had a fresh vigorous life at that time. From 1893-99, Benoyendranath was the guiding spirit. Every morning, there in the Fraternal Home, its work would start with prayers. In the evenings, there would be readings or talks on intellectual and religious topics. Keshabchandra's *Agnimantre Diksha* was their inspiration. Sometimes he would invite Rishi Pratapchandra, Dr. Brojendra Nath Seal and other venerable persons to speak on different subjects, to enrich and enlighten the youthful minds of the members of the Home. The old Journal 'Morning Star' was revived and the Sunday School for the moral training of boys', started at the Albert Institute.

**Plague in
Calcutta :
1898**

At this time in May, 1898, an epidemic of Plague broke out in Calcutta and many people deserted the City in mortal fear. Some of the members of the Prayer Meeting Band flocked in the Fraternal Home. They had thus a unique opportunity of group *Sadhan* (दण साधन) The days were veritable utsabs, and their prayers were mainly the source of moral strength, to enable them to nurse the sick. Benoyendranath removed his family to the residence of Mohitchandra at Hoogly, where the latter was then posted and he with his next brother Satyendranath, who was a medical student, stayed on in Calcutta.

A class-friend of Satyendranath, Monmohan Chatterjee contracted the dreadful disease from a plague

patient and ultimately fell a victim to it. He was a fine soul and dearly loved by all of the Prayer Meeting Band. And Benoyendranath was almost constantly by his bed, with the head of the sick on his lap. He bestowed all love and attention on nursing him—not only the ailing body with cares, medicines, and diets, but also with prayers and songs for the parting soul, in its voyage to eternity. Those who knew Benoyendranath well, said that it was one of the rare occasions when tears were found flowing down his shining cheeks, while praying with the mortal frame on his lap.

**Dear
Monmohon
Dies on his
Lap**

One of the boarders of the Hindu Hostel of the Presidency College was attacked with plague. All the other inmates left the Hostel. The father of the boy came to attend to his son. And who else would be seen there along with the worried father, sharing his anxieties? The father sat by the side of the boy and Benoyendranath by the head,—fan in hand.

**Ministering
Angel at the
Hindu
Hostel**

After the Plague, came in its wake, the ravages of Cyclone and Earth-quake in different parts of Bengal. At Chittagong, Cyclone came in all its fury and created a great havoc. It blew off many houses and sea-waves rushed into the land, killing and washing away many people and cattle—the dead remains polluting the whole atmosphere. Benoyendranath received from his 'relative friend*', a vivid description of the horrid scenes, which deeply touched his loving heart and stirred it up for relief-work for the sufferers. He at once sent out the boarders of the Fraternal Home with a touching appeal to the public for relief of the afflicted people. It bore immediate fruits and large sums of money and heaps of clothes poured in. In the meantime, the people of Chittagong had formed themselves into parties for relief work in the affected area, under the leadership of Revered Rajeswar Gupta, the local minister of the Brahmo Samaj and Pundit Kashi Chandra Gupta and other Brahmo teachers. People of Chittagong gratefully

**Cyclone and
Earthquake
Ravages at
Chittagong**

**Benoyen-
dranath to
the Rescue**

**Relief Work
by
Brahmos**

realised the influence of one Professor of Calcutta over the public,—only a few lines from him worked wonders.

Speaking about Revered Rajeswar Gupta and Pundit Kashi Chandra Gupta and the Brahmos of Chittagong, a few lines on their zeal on spiritual matters, would not be out of place. During their annual *Utsavas*, they used to have Kirtan Procession (নগর-সঙ্কীৰ্ত্তন) in the streets for the relief of the spiritual distress of the people,—an entirely novel thing for the educated class, at that time. They truly believed in the moral efficacy of the *Kirtans* and thought it an essential commodity for the hungry souls. In 1880, the local Police authorities, at the instigation of one Mr. Goods, the Chief of the local Port Commissioners, considered bare-footed singing processions of the gentry, as a public nuisance and issued orders prohibiting this street-singsings. The leaders did not obey the unjust orders, as they were on the path of Truth and within their rights. They were put under the prison-bars. On getting the news of the arrests, Keshabchandra arranged an appeal to the Calcutta High-Court and (Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee and probably Mr. W. C. Banerjee also, helped him in the matter) got the leaders released. This courting of arrest may be regarded as a remarkable instance of *Satyagraha*, launched more than half a century before the general *Satyagraha* movement of the country, that hastened our Independence.

Rajeswar, Kashichandra and their band were brave souls indeed, unflinching in the path of Truth, in obedience to their voice of conscience. True followers of Keshabchandra,—they did inherit this soul-force through prayer. The love for real freedom in their mind and also in the minds of Benoyendranath and his Band, must have been fanned by such bold utterance of Keshabchandra and other Brahmo leaders, as—

“You (British) cannot hold India for the interest or welfare of England. I hope and trust that the merciful God will give you wisdom and strength, faith and piety enough to behave properly. If not, India will no longer be

Rajewar &
Kashi-
chandra
and Satya-
grahas in
1880

Keshab's
'Quit India'
1870

in your hands. You will be forced to leave India to herself and we shall do our best, to conduct our business in the best way we can."*

Famine broke out in Central India, a few months after the Bengal Cyclone and relief-work was again organised by Benoyendranath, on behalf of the Brahmo Samaj Committee. This time, collections for relief were not confined to India alone, but money came from outside, mainly from the Unitarian friends. Some of these reached Benoyendranath even after the Relief-work was closed and with the balance amounting to about Rs. 10,000/- a permanent Relief Fund was created in hands of the Brahma Samaj Committee. In Benoyendra nath's time, the Brahmo Samaj used to be in the fore-front in all Socio-Religious activities—political as well.

Famine
Relief

There came several proposals of marriage for Benoyendranath at this time. Some of his relations felt that such a brilliant career deserved to be much better placed in worldly-life and wanted to get him married into a rich family. One such attempt was on the part of Principal Bepin Behary Gupta, the famous Mathematician, who although a distantly related grand-father, was really a friend. He selected a very rich girl as the bride and tried hard to coax Benoyendranath to agree to his proposal. Principal Gupta, baffled in his attempts, remarked that he had never before met with any failure in life. It was left for Benoy to give him a taste of that. But Principal Gupta did not take his first defeat to heart, for the refusal came with nothing but a sweet smile that made him smile too. Yet, another proposal came from a distinguished Bar-at-law,—but it did not end in smiles this time. Benoyendranath felt offended

* It is to be noted that this is from a speech of Keshabchandra, delivered in England itself and as early as in 1870—more than sixty years before Gandhiji's memorable 'Quit India' verdict, stirred the soul of India. Even before this, Rajah Ram Mohon Roy, the 'Father of Modern India' in 1823, warned the Houses of Parliament, in connection with the Self-Government Bill, that the British may have to leave India within a century, if they do not give up wrong policy in India.

and it did wound his self-respect, as one of the conditions of the proposal was that he would have to break away from his family and live in a separate house, to be presented to him as marriage dowry. This time, Benoyendranath's reaction was marked by his shining countenance suddenly growing crimson with blood rushing up. His disgusted look was enough to indicate his injured feelings.

Life Dry :
Soul a Void

While at Bhagalpur, Benoyendranath felt rather lonely. He pined for his dear companions he left at Calcutta and Berhampur. He came to feel that the sweetness in him was fast ebbing away and his soul was becoming a void. So long he had been contemplating that a life of dry asceticism was meant for his future. But eventually the great truth was revealed to him, that the communion with God meant loving relations with His creations. The following from his Diary dated the 4th October, 1892, expresses his feelings at the times—

"Religion has never set its face against happiness. The Doctrine of *Nirvana* seeks to solve the problems of human misery. The Sermon on the Mount speaks of righteousness as essentially a state of blessedness. It is the proud individualism upon which stoicism stands, that sets up an ideal of strength, which is ashamed to accept any boon from Nature. The ideal of religion is a self-abnegation,* which means ineffable sweetness and peace. Stoicism means perpetual warfare. Religion is perpetual triumph. Stoicism is reason, conscience; religion is Love. The motto of stoicism is 'Terrar Dumprosim' (May I be wasted so I be of use); whereas religion loves to take as its symbol, the seed that falls to the ground and opens up after being moistened, only to come forth again in beautiful flowers and fruits on the trees.

Seeds Ger-
minate unto
Flowers &
Fruits

"But, everywhere in the discipline of human

According to Benoyendranath—"Asceticism was to bear in silent trust, the trials bestowed by His unseen Hand and to bless the unfriendliness. It is not depriving myself of pleasure, in the house of God. Self-sacrifice is not mere self-denial, living for others, but is a loving self-surrender to the will of God."

character, Law must precede Love. Nay, the perception of a Higher, irrespective of the Happier,—must be the eternal law of human progress ; and if the two are ultimately found to coincide, it is not because the happier is the higher, but because the higher must ever be the happier for man.”

Love is
Happiness

He felt a deep longing for a companion in life—it may be said for eternity too. And at the age of thirty, he found that in Sjta. Sakuntala Sen, daughter of Revered Prasanna Kumar Sen (who accompanied Keshabchandra in his England tour) and the sister of Justice P. K. Sen of the Patna High Court and one of the early Tagore Law Lecturers of the Calcutta University. She had the gift of a poet and she wrote some fine poems and a few beautiful play-lets for girls. Her style of writing had a charm, all its own, marked by a rare sweetness, integrity and a love of beauties of both nature and human-life. Here was a life of culture with a prayer-ful soul, which contributed so much to sustain Benoyendranath's strength in all his toils.

Life's Com-
panion in
Sakuntala
Debi

When his marriage was settled, Benoyendranath returned to the bosom of his family, leaving Pramathalal in charge of the Fraternal Home, after his return from England, in 1899. After the marriage on 14th July, 1899, Benoyendranath felt as a new man and was seen refreshing himself over the chapter on 'Blumine' in her transcendental height of ethereal love, from Carlyle's 'Sartor Resartos'. Needless to say, the marriage was an ideal one, each finding fulfilment of one's self in the other. Glimpses of Benoyendranath's feelings at that time could be had from his beautiful lecture—'Sanctifying Love', delivered at Mourbhanj after his union. He was blessed with a daughter, who is now leading a happy married life.

Feels a
New Man :
Refreshes
over
'Blumine'

The two missions of Benoyendranath's life were Teaching and Preaching,—both equally dear to him. He regarded teaching as no less a sacred trust than preaching. The active forces behind both were his pure prayer-ful soul and a living faith in God. About the

Two Mis-
sions—
Teaching &
Preaching :
Prayer &
Living Faith—
The Active
Force

secrets of his success in teaching missions, Sadhu T. L. Vaswani says.—

“I know of no one else, who loved so ardently his pupils. He carried with him an atmosphere of gracefulness and a heart full of love, modesty, spontaneity, faith and reverence. Benoyendranath was a powerful speaker and the secret of his success was the man. As he spoke, he transmitted soul-energy. He always lived a life hidden in God,—his centre of gravity.”

“His soul-life rested on God-communion. The balance, sanity and universality of his out-look, had their source in the daily communion with the unseen Infinite. Consecrated to Truth above party, his life bore witness to the supreme non-sectarian character of his Faith, which is not one more sect added to the long list already existing, but a Religion of Harmony.”

Benoyendranath achieved a great success in his mission of Teaching, as Professor of the Presidency College and his multifarious activities among the student community of Calcutta, through the several Debating Clubs and Literary Societies, mainly in connection with the University Institute.

All through his life—unfortunately short though it was, he read numerous papers and delivered quite a large number of lectures on literary, philosophical, moral and religious subjects. All these had a deep spiritual tone running through them. They received high appreciation. Only some of these have been subsequently published as Essays, in three volumes. A learned disquisition on these subjects was written as an introduction to the Literary volume, by Principal James of the Calcutta Presidency College—a classical scholar and writer of the famous Philosophical treatise on Plato.

His lecture on ‘The Student’s life and the Stage’, delivered in connection with the ‘Metropolitan Temperance and Purity Organisation’, had a strong appeal to the youth of Bengal, for its moral tone. It was published in a book form and had a ready appreciation. He

Literary,
Ethical and
Theological
Papers

read a paper on Browning, with the significant title—‘Self-concealment of Genius in Literature’, in the Wellesley Church. There were three memorable lectures on Tennyson—‘Idylls of the Holy Grail’ (1900) at the University Institute, ‘The Man and the Poet’ (Aug, 6, 1906) at the Overtoun Hall, on the occasion of the poet’s centenary and ‘Gleanings from In Memorium’ (1906), in the same place. They were all of outstanding merit.

To Benoyendranath, the ‘Quest’ of the Holy Grail means a persistent stirring of the heart, a constant pursuit after the Ideal Truth, which is the end of life. Sadhu Pramathalal sent some of Benoyendranath’s writings on Tennyson to the poet’s niece, Miss Welde, whom he knew very well, while in England. He received a highly appreciative note in reply to say, that she had heard such wonderful interpretations as of Prof. Sen, only from her own uncle himself and that even Stopford Brooke could not reach the height, from which the poet got his light and the urge to follow the gleam.

The Quest &
Tennyson’s
Niece

As stated before, Benoyendranath’s other mission of life was Preaching. This was accomplished through his work in connection with the various organisations of the Brahmo Samaj, viz. The Brahmo Samaj Committee, the Brahmo Samaj of India and the Bharatvarshiya Brahmo Mandir. His life-long preachings were mainly confined to Calcutta, but his Western Pilgrimage in 1905 and the Theistic Conference in 1909, were his great opportunities for preaching elsewhere.

Preaching
—the Other
Mission

The Brahmo Samaj Committee,—a committee of representatives from the three sections of the Brahmo Samaj, functioned from February, 1896 to 1906. Rev. J. T. Sunderland, representative of the British and Foreign Unitarian Churches, visited Calcutta in June, 1896. On the basis of his suggestions, conveyed in a letter addressed to Rishi Pratapchandra, this committee was formed to co-operate with the Unitarians to develop the Theistic Movement in India. At a meeting of the three sections of the Brahmo Samaj, held at the Peace Cottage, the residence of Pratapchandra, the following were elected

The Brahmo
Samaj Com-
mittee :
1896-1906

as its members:—Srijuts Satyendra Nath Tagore, Rabindranath Tagore, Kshitindra Nath Tagore, Pundit Prya Nath Shastri of the Adi Brahmo Samaj and Rishi Pratap Chandra Mazumder, Rev. Trailokya Nath Sanyal, Prof. Mohit Chandra Sen, Sj. Pramatha Lal Sen, Prof. Benoyendranath Sen of the Nababidhan Brahmo Samaj and Srijuts Ananda Mohan Bose, Umesh Chandra Dutta, Hem Chandra Sarkar, Dr. P. K. Roy, Pandit Sivanath Sastri, Principal Heramba Chandra Maitra of the Sadharam Brahmo Samaj, Prof. Benoyendranath Sen was appointed as the Secretary and Sj Hem Chandra Sarkar as the Assistant Secretary.

Several Public Meetings were held under its auspices and a Theological College was started in this connection, where Benoyendranath delivered his memorable introductory lecture—‘The Position of the Brahmo Samaj in World’s Religious Movement’. Two other very illuminating and useful ones delivered by Benoyendranath were —‘A Theological College for India’ and ‘The Aims of the Brahmo Vidyalay’. A Scholarship available at Oxford for Theological study, called the ‘Manchester Scholarship’, was arranged. There was also an affiliated Theistic Mission Society, for the training of Missionaries. The Committee worked till 1906.

The Brahmo Samaj of India,—an organisation of the believers in the Brahmo Faith, was started by Brahmananda Keshabchandra in November, 1866, for the propagation of its fundamental principle of worship of ‘One True God’. After the death of Keshabchandra, it stopped functioning from 1886. This was re-organised by Benoyendranath in August, 1906, after a break of long twenty years. Its idea was more or less, to serve as the connecting link between the several Brahma Samajes in India.

It holds its Annual Meetings during the Maghotsav. All Theists might come within the ambit of this organisation, for it is based on broad principles and is free from all controversies that lead to misunderstandings. It is an all-comprehensive organisation, in its ideal

In 1896

The Brahmo
Samaj of
India :
1866-1886:
Revived,—
1906

set-up. The basis of the new constitution and the preliminary scheme of work of the re-organised body, was drawn up through hard labour by Prof. Mohit Chandra Sen and Sadhu T. L. Vaswani, with a provisional Committee consisting of the Missionaries and representative lay workers of the *Mandali*. Mohitchandra was the secretary of the provisional committee and on his death, Promothalal took up the charge. Benoyendranath was the inspiring genius all through and became the Secretary, when the organisation took up a final shape. After one year's work, he submitted a detailed report to its annual meeting during the Maghotsava of 1907. Unfortunately, this institution, in spite of its liberal constitution and universal appeal, could not get the support and co-operation from all, which it deserved.

Its Broad
Principles :
All compre-
hensive
Nature

Benoyendranath's 'Preaching' through the Bharat-varshya Brahma Mandir did not have a regular flow. On occasion, he had to hold himself a little aloof from the Mandali,—but soon after, he would join it again. His last come-back to the bosom of his *Mandali* in 1910, was meant to be a permanent attachment but under the inscrutable ways of Providence, it was ordained to be a short-lived one, due to his untimely passing away. It was a rude shock to the *Mandali*! Before this, he was in the Executive Committee of the congregation for several years and took an active part in its re-organisation in 1904. He came forward thrice with great enthusiasm, to put fresh life and vigour in the annual *Utsavas*. His earnest attempt since 1900 had its effect in 1903 and the enthusiastic *utsav* in 1905 was a memorable one. He used to take charge of the guest-house and look to the comforts of guests. Unfortunately, Pratapchandra's death on 27th May, 1905, proved a damper for this spirit.

Mandir &
Mandali

On the last occasion, a striking innovation in the programme, out of his loving heart, was the practical expression of sympathy for the poor (দরিদ্র নারায়ণ) suffering humanity. Visits to the several hospitals, viz. The Albert Victor Hospital, Hospital of the College of

They Are Not
Forgotten

Festive Joy
for all in
Utsab

Physicians and Surgeons, Gobra Leper Asylum, and others. The distribution of flowers, fruits, sweets was a common feature. To charitable institution like the Deaf and Dumb School, The School for the Blind, Anath-Asram, The Refuge etc., were given in addition, warm-clothes, cloths and blankets. This formed an integral part of the programme during *utsab* ceremony. Thus, they could also partake of the festive joys.

Benoyendranath started the Prayer Meeting for the young in 1879 and Prayer Meeting was his life-blood. He was the inspiration for the Theistic Endeavour Society for the publication and propagation of Theistic literatures. The Sunday School for Boys (1886) and Nitividyalyay for Girls in 1906, after returning from his Pilgrimage, for imparting moral training, were started with his blessings. He used to hold regular weekly special extra-curricular classes for grown-up ladies in connection with the Victoria Institute (from 1903), along with Rishi Pratap Chandra Mozumdar, Upadhyaya Gour Gobinda Ray, Sree Satyendra Nath Tagore, Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore, Rev. Braja Gopal Neogy, Prof. Mohit Chandra Sen, Prof. Subodh Chandra Mahalanobis, Dr. Satyendra Nath Sen and other eminent persons.

Inspired
Upashanas
inspires

His *Upasanas*—weekly or in connection with *Utsavas*—were highly inspiring. They used to attract large gathering of worshippers—his soul soared high in deep communion with the Spirit and the congregation was raised to a high plane through his inspired *upashna*.

In 1900, Benoyendranath delivered a series of three lectures on his study of the Upanishads. These were published in 1902, under the significant title,—‘The Intellectual Ideal’, which received universal admiration from students of Upanishads and merited a unique letter of appreciation from Poet Rabindranath. This letter and Lord Ronadshay’s enthusiastic reference to this are in the first chapter, on the ‘Trios’. No less interesting is what Prof. Sayce, the great critic and linguist, said,—“Here, if anywhere, the expositor’s power of clear presentation is put to the test. I have been charmed with

the lucid and attractive language in which the most abstruse questions of philosophy and religion have been explained, and they have been treated from the inside". The appreciation from Rev. Manstat, who presided at the Geneva International conference of Liberal Religions, where Benoyendranath went as a delegate from India, is no less striking. After going through the book, he wrote to Benoyendranath at America—"Your book has interested me very much. You are a master of the very difficult questionnaires of Philosophy and Religion. Believe me, your ideal of spiritual life is very near my ideal". The first lecture was on the 'Intellectual Ideal of the Upanishads', the second one on the 'Intellectual Ideal of the Vedanta Philosophy' and the third one on 'Sankaracharya's Doctrine of Liberation', These Intellectual Ideals begin with the cease-less and end-less working of the spirit of enquiry (জিজ্ঞাসা) and culminated in (অথ তৌ ব্রহ্মজিজ্ঞাসা) or knowledge of the Supreme Being—derived from continuous and concentrated devotional life (তপস্বী) and intensive religious practice with self-renunciations. (যজ্ঞ) The answer comes only through this *tapasya* or a course of self-discipline, to become worthy of the life in *Brahma*—the infinite source of Light and Bliss. This light alone can dispel all darkness of life in the senses and the cravings of flesh and chaotic passions or Sin.

Intellectual
Ideal of the
Vedanta :
Clear Presen-
tation of a
Difficult
Subject

The *Guru* would never have any ready-made answer to the earnest anxious enquiry of the *sishtya*, when made in a spirit of deep self-surrender, wonder, faith and reverence. The answer must come from within and through intensive practice alone. The *Guru* could only open the eyes by pointing out the apparent contradictions that would cross the mind of the *sishtya* during the process. All doubts would disappear and a better understanding could be arrived at, only through deeper and intenser exercise of devotional powers. Thus, the *sishtya* would move to the higher and higher stages only through persistent endeavour. The essence of the.

Jignyasa
& Tapsya :
The Guru &
the Sishya

The Beauty
to be En-
joyed in its
Entirety.

dictum—‘Know Thyself’ should be accepted in its reality and not in the Socratic manner of negating all that is not soul (নেতি নেত্যতি). Always know the soul (তৎ বিজিজ্ঞাস্ব*) that is the note of the Upanisads* The march to higher and higher knowledge of the soul through actual realisation (অয়মাত্মা ব্রহ্ম) comes only through perpetual negation of the world of sense, till the eternal ‘yes’ of the soul is revealed behind all phenomena of life. Any attempt at synopsis is however futile as both its deep inner sense and charm are lost thereby. The beauty of the book in its entirety is to be enjoyed and the condensed *Rashas* in the book is a ‘must’ for all students of the Upanishads.

Three Pro-
posed Sup-
plementary
Serices of
Ideals—
Wisdom, Will
Feeling

Following the series of discourses on the Upanishads, Benoyendranath planned another three series of lectures on his study,—firstly, on the ‘Buddha and his *Nirvana*’, secondly, on ‘Christ and the Cross’ and thirdly, on ‘Chaitanya of Inebriating Love’. He even selected his titles for the publication of these. The first series on the Buddha would be named, ‘Ideal of True Wisdom’,—the knowledge that brings *Nirvana*, the light of the world, the Law of Being, the life of Infinite Mercy for the good of humanity, by preventing Age, removing Grief and killing Death. This, by quenching Thirst and satiating Desire, brings Peace Abounding.

Budha & His
Nirvana

Christ &
The Cross

The second series on the life of Christ would be—‘Ideal of the Will’,—self-consecrated will, power of character, the Son-ship. This will must be in perfect unison and in tune with the Supreme Will of the Father—the will to atone for humanity through prayers—“Let Thy kingdom come and let Thy will be done—on earth”. This will leads to the Supreme Spirit—self-realised in itself, and realising itself through the process of time.

The third one on Sree Chaitanya would be the ‘Ideal of Feeling’—the community of life of Feeling with the

* অথর্ব বেদীয় মাণ্ড্য-উপনিষৎ (১২); সামবেদীয় ছান্দোগ্য উপনিষৎ (৬।৮।৭)

Supreme Love, and with humility through love, without any touch of self and taint of flesh. This is inebriating love (চৈব) for the Supreme Love and the soul of beauty in its different manifestations. This is the self-forgetting and maddening love, which knowing no caste, no differences of religion, embracing the lepers and the worst sinners, lead unto a life of true conversion and regeneration of humanity.

Challanya &
Inebriating
Love

All these four serieses when completed, would place before the readers the complete picture of the Many mingling into One—harmony,—perfection in Humanity as a whole, as in the Divinity. This is the way he could respond to all the movements in the spirit of the New Dispensation. He did not live to deliver these three serieses of lectures. But on the basis of the four-fold function of the mind—Intellectual, Wisdom, Will and Feeling, which although considered as separate entities for psychological analysis, is really one integral whole of every facet of mind-psychosis, which according to Benoyendranath, constitute the highest Humanity in God's creation.

Many in
One—Har-
mony : The
Humanity

Benoyendranath delivered in his life-time quite a large number of lectures on the Gita, at several places, such as the Albert institute (in connection with the Theological classes), the Presidency College Study Circles, the Calcutta University Institute and the Bharat-varshiya Brahma Mandir. At the last place in 1906, a series of about a dozen lectures were delivered in connection with the Theological college. All these lectures attracted a large audience,—mostly from his pupils. One of them was Dr. Mahendra Lal Sarkar, who afterwards became a Professor of Philosophy in the Presidency College. He was a great devotee and a world-famous writer on Indian Philosophy and Religions.

Only four of these lectures as noted down by Benoyendranath's wife could be published as a booklet—called 'Studies on Gita' (গীতা অধ্যয়ন) with a beautiful Introduction from Dr. Sarkar, in which the latter des-

The 'Gita
Adhyan' :
Ideo-realistic with
Historical
Back-
Ground

cribes how with frenzied zeal he attended these devotional and philosophic treats. These lectures were in an ideo-realistic vein, and had a historical back-ground. Philosophical in the interpretations and deeply spiritual in their character, these produced deep impressions on the minds of the audience. The expositions of the *slokas* were in the light of his own life-experience and were made lively with quotations of parallel passages from the Bible and famous literatures. While he was speaking with great feeling about the emanence of God in His creation, the presence of God was felt by him and this thrill was clearly reflected on his bright face and a spell spread over the whole audience. This is *Biswarup Darsan*, indeed !

His Theo-
logical
Lectures

During the five years, between the lectures, 'Intellectual Ideal' in 1900 and his pilgrimage unto eternity, he delivered many lectures from the mandir. Of the English ones, only six have been published, viz. 'The Spirit of Sacrifice' (1902). 'In God's Cornfield' (1903), 'Banished for Home' (1903) and 'Pratap Chandra Mozumder' (1905). 'Backward and Forward' (1907) 'The Titanic Disaster' (1912)*. The Bengalee ones that have been published are the memorable series of seven** on his studies of Nababidhan, delivered in March and April 1900, দ্যো: পিতা নোহসি (1910), আরতি (1911), বিন্মৃতির দুর্গতি (1911), আকাশ পূরণ (1912), স্বর্গ-রাজ্যের অন্বেষণ (1912).

The Trio of the Prayer Meeting were the spiritual sons (মানস পুত্র) of Rishi Pratapchandra—and he was a very happy father. They shared equally the paternal love and

* Some of The others, delivered at other places are—'New Dispensation (Convention of Religion, Town Hall 1908), 'Sources of our Knowledge of God', 'Faith and Revelation', 'Forgiveness of Sin' (The three in connection with the Theological College).

**নব-ব্রহ্মবিদ্যা, নববিধানের আদর্শ, বিবিধ আদর্শের মিলন ও বিকাশ, বিধান ও নববিধান, প্রাচ্য ও পাশ্চাত্য আদর্শ, পাশ্চাত্য আদর্শের অভিব্যক্তি, প্রাচ্য আদর্শের অভিব্যক্তি ।

affection and inherited the Rishi's prophetic vision, fine culture and deep spiritual insight. They were highly intellectual,—geniuses in their own field of work. They were gentle in nature, scrupulously chaste and refined and noble in their habits.

But Benoyendranath, because of his wonderful poise and alacrity in life-movements, was an all-round person and was considered by Pratapchandra to be more 'dependable' than his other two *Pagla* dear ones, either to take charge of his ailing body or to take over from his weary, wrinkled hand,—the Torch of the Interpreter Pilgrim and carry his message to the far-off lands. Benoyendranath was a genius with wonderful mental and spiritual balance,—a mystic without its dream. Pratapchandra himself felt their necessities. Even in 1902, when he was sixty-two, he writes in his Diary—"I shall always watch and control myself even in my spiritual exercises. Perfect equipoise is the ideal of my life, the blessed spirit of God is my most precious possession".

Pratap-
chandra's
Manash-
Putras

All-round
Dependable
Son : Takes
Charge Of
& From
Pratap-
chandra

During Pratapchandra's last days, the 'Trio' with their friends took charge of his bodily care and Pramathalal was the first to offer himself to be Pratapchandra's attendant during his stay in the house-boat on the Ganges. But as soon as Benoyendranath got his leave, he accompanied Pratapchandra when he went for a change to Simultala and then to Patna—the place of his dear ones,—'Aghore Prakash', Dr. Paresh Nath Chatterjee, Rev. Braja Gopal Neogy, Gouri Prasad Majumder, Nagendra Chandra Mitra, Ambika Charan Sen, Dr. Kamakhya Charan Banerjee, Bhai Baldeo Narayan, Brahmadev Narayan, Bechu Narayan, Nritya Gopal Mitra, Baroda Kanta Ghose, Principal Debendra Nath Sen and others. From Patna, Pratapchandra was sent to Dehradun for further change, accompanied by Benoyendranath and some of his other dear followers.

At Simultala, Pratapchandra was given all comforts and personal care of Sir R. N. Mukherjee at his very fine house. Yet, he felt happy—when his dear Benoy would go there, with a fine basket of fruits and flowers

Simultala :
Patna :
Dehradun

and good cheers. From the morning on the day Benoyendranath arrived at Simultala, Saudamini Debi, wife of the Rishi, noticed that Pratapchandra started feeling better.*

From Patna, Pratapchandra sends his S.O.S. to Benoyendranath—"I cannot say I am very depressed, but what is to be done ! Where can I go ! Give all these matter your earnest and careful consideration and write to me as early as you can". He looked forward to Benoy as his sheet-anchor. When Benoyendranath reached Patna, he was greeted by Pratapchandra with the loving remark that he was looking at his watch since dawn, in expectation of Benoy's arrival**

Benoy
Leaves—
Then Strike
the Tent

From Dehradun, when Benoyendranath's leave was almost over, he had to return to Calcutta. Pratapchandra came to learn of this from Benodbehary, (Pratapchandra's nephew) and he gave orders to strike the tent immediately. He was not prepared to stay on there even one day without Benoy. A compartment in the train could fortunately be reserved and the whole party returned to Calcutta that very day.

At Calcutta, Pramathalal, Benoyendranath, Mohitchandra with the whole Band of the Prayer Meeting was by turn, on duty—to attend to the fast-declining mortal frame of the Rishi. There was not much left for them to do, but to watch carefully day and night and try to give as much comfort to the Rishi as possible. Benoyendranath would hasten to Pratapchandra after his college classes and sit by him, fan in hand, till late at night. On one occasion just at midnight, Benoyendra thinking that the Rishi was asleep, left the bed-side and

*আজ ঐয়ার শরীর অল্প দিনের চেয়ে অনেক ভাল ; এ রকম স্মৃতিও অল্প দিন থাকে না। এটা খালি তুমি এসেছ বলে...তুমি আসবে শোনা থেকে এই রকম হয়েছে।

**আমি একদিন কেবল সময় গুণছি; কালকে শেষ রাত্রি থেকে বড়ি দেখছি; পাঞ্জাব মেলের সময় হয়ে গেলেও যখন এলে না, তখন বড়িই disappointed হয়েছিলাম। আজ যদি না আসতে, বড়িই কষ্ট হত।

was starting for home. Pratapchandra could feel this move and said—"Benoy, are you leaving so soon?" Saudamini Debi smilingly said—"So early indeed! It is already past midnight. Benoy had come straight from the College. Won't he have some food and rest?" Pratapchandra felt for Benoy, but sighed and murmured—"All right; go now. But, when are you coming tomorrow?" That sad voice breathed infinite blessing and Benoyendranath sat down again. He only left on the insistence of Saudamini Debi. From the start of his illness, Pratapchandra longed for Benoyendranath's presence by his bed-side. His restlessness grew from day to day. As his end drew near, Benoyendranath's very presence brought him great relief. It appeared that his soul shed its soothing yogic influence upon the patient and brought him great peace and tranquillity. This was the impression of Saudamini Debi.*

**The Soothing
Hand Can't
Be Spared**

Fortunately, the summer vacation was now on and Benoyendranath could be by Pratapchandra's bed-side, practically all the time. About this, Pratapchandra's biographer and one of his dear followers writes—

"But all accounts of Pratapchandra's life would be incomplete, if an account of the self-sacrificing zeal, with which some, whose lives have been built up through Pratapchandra's ministration and example, nursed him during his last illness, was not mentioned. It was the fitting close of a life that spent itself in the service of others. Day and night, they, guided by the gentle dutiful Benoyendranath, who alas so soon followed him, watched by his bed-side, attended to all his wants, and often did menial services. No good son could serve his parents more faithfully."

**Every
Service
To—Life
Spent in
Service to
Them**

It is however a cruel irony of fate, that none of his three spiritual sons—Naloo, Benoy and Mohit was by

*অম্মুখের আরম্ভ হইতেই বিনয়েন্দ্রকে নিকটে পাইবার জন্য তিনি ব্যাকুল হইতেন। এখন সেই ব্যাকুলতা আরও বদ্ধিত হইল। বুঝি বিনয়েন্দ্র নিকটে থাকিলে, যোগের অমুকুল বাতাস বহিত।

his side, when Pratapchandra breathed his last,—they being away for a short while for their meals. Only his aged, devoted wife, (through whose selfless and unremitting care, the long useful life of her husband was possible), Bhai Braja Gopal Neogy and Devendranath—Benoyendranath's fifth brother, were by his side during his final exit from here.

It was therefore no wonder, that Benoyendranath could understand the mystic language of Pratapchandra so well. On his last sick-bed after a night-watch, the window overlooking his head was closed down in the morning, to prevent the sun falling on the face. This humble attendant was taken aback by gentle mutterings of Pratapchandra—"Dont break my link with the Infinite". Taking it as setting in of delirium, he got frightened and rushed to Benoyendranath, who was discussing the condition of the patient with the Rishi's wife in the next room. Benoyendranath and Saudamini Debi then entered the sick-room, listened to the mutterings, looked up to the closed window and then gently smiling, said—"He only wants the window to be opened out". What a sublime way of expressing his wishes and what a wonderful understanding on the part of his faithful dependable son! The Rishi only smiled and through that smile poured out his silent benedictions on Benoyendranath.

And if such was Pratapchandra's mystic ways of blessing, his ways of admonishing his dear ones were equally sweet and enjoyable. Both were welcome and soothing to the soul.

From Dr. J. J. Barrows's Biographical notes on Pratapchandra, we find that the Rishi was not very happy about his renouncement of the University education. According to the Rishi,—“Self-education is more or less without a system in youth and means carelessness and langour in manhood”. But to everybody else his careful methodical habits were exemplary. But what was good for others was not good enough for him. Pratapchandra regarded cleanliness as next to godliness and carefulness

Rishi's
Mystic
Language :
Its Inter-
preter

Benedictions
and Admo-
nitions
Equally
Sweet.

next to holiness. And to Benoyendranath, both were as natural as life-breath itself—but it was not so to the ordinary men.

Carefulness
Next to
Holiness

Benoyendranath's 'relative-friend' had the good fortune, to be in blessed company of Pratapchandra, at Kurseong for sometime. On his return to Dacca,—the place of his posting, a neatly-packed parcel reached him, which contained the manuscript and proofs of Pratapchandra's last work,—'Ashis', his Autobiography. It bore instruction to be sent back, after correction and 'alterations of a word or two, here and there, if considered very necessary', to his Calcutta address, where he was returning in the meantime. Pratapchandra in his acknowledgment of the returned parcel, wrote—
".....I am anxious about you. From your hand-writing it seems you are not well". The mystery hovering round his note was nothing but his own way of admonition. Pratapchandra in his usual careful way, placed the manuscript inside a tin cylinder, but these were returned packed only in paper and cloth, the cylinder having been omitted. It was used by the children as a toy-telescope. His address was moreover not very clearly written and ran some risk of the '4' being mistaken for a '9'. One can be quite sure that the 'dependable' Benoyendranath would never have acted carelessly.

The 'Ashis'
Manuscript
Brings
Ashis

Alas! Pratapchandra was taken seriously ill soon after, and seeing the book through the press was left in charge of his dear son, Pramathalal. He took the trouble of carrying the proofs personally to Patna, where Pratapchandra was sent for a change. And how Pramathalal was amply rewarded for duly fulfilling his pleasant task! Only a few days before Pratapchandra passed away, Pramathalal rushed to the Peace Cottage with the first copy of 'Ashis' from the press. It was after dusk, when Pratapchandra had already retired for rest. He had just enquired of Benoyendranath what Naloo had done about his book. When told that Naloo had just arrived with the book, which he would hand over to him

Naloo
Rushes
with the
First Copy

the first thing in the next morning, Pratapchandra insisted on having a look at it, then and there. He sat up on the bed, touched the book to his fore-head and with his beaming smile on his face, blessed his sons.

In 1905, Benoyendranath was invited to 'The International Conference of the Unitarian and other Liberal Religious Thinkers and Workers' at Geneva, as a delegate from the Brahmo Samaj. Several farewell parties were arranged by the Prayer Meeting, the Sunday School for Boys, the Prachar Ashram, the Bharatvarshiya Brahmo Mandir, the University Institute and the Presidency College. He left with the blessings of the elders and good wishes of his friends and the young. It is significant that the subject of his last lecture at the Victoria Institution was—'*Tirtha-jatra*' or 'Pilgrimage'. At the *mandir*, the text for his Sermon was—'*Maya and Prem*'. The Pilgrimage lasted from 3rd August, 1905 to March, 1906, a description of which will be found in Appendix B, in the first chapter of this book.

We have seen before that Benoyendranath's preachings through the Bharatvarshiya Brahmo Mandir were not in a continuous flow. After Pramathalal's return from England on the completion of his Theological studies, he was gradually drawn in his mission works for the *mandali*. Works for its spiritual growth was more or less, put to his charge. How happy was Benoyendranath, when he found that he could make his dear Naloo overcome his natural shyness and come forward gradually to get himself deeply involved in the service of the *Mandali*. Benoyendranath put himself wholeheartedly to its re-organisation in 1905; but when his report on the 'Brahmo Samaj of India' came out in 1907, it had a disappointing result. He kept himself aloof from the general body of the *Mandali* from 1907-10. He then confined his services to its youngmen—to the Prayer Meeting, the Theistic Endeavour Society and the Theological Classes.

Benoyendranath's mental frame and attitude has been very aptly expressed by his Prayer Meeting friend, Principal Lalit Mohan Chatterjee—

Benoyendra-
nath's
Pilgrimage
Abroad

Benoyendra-
nath
for the
Young
1907-10

"Benoyendranath's character was like a piece of exquisite music, in which notes are harmoniously mingled without any jar or discord. In our Prayer Meetings, there was no Priest-craft, cavilling about forms and technicalities. In that pure atmosphere of freedom, our souls expanded over a wide horizon. Through our prayers, our hearts revealed the Divine in us. Benoyendranath's friendship was pure and sweet and none was loved and respected more than he. And who thought so deeply about the Brahmo Samaj, as he? Who loved it more? Who wanted to serve it more? He visualised that in future, public worship would be shorter, more like chants, more choral. The missionary of the present type will be replaced by lay house-holders, who live in an unworldly spirit. Such a type of missionary was Benoyendranath himself."

**Life : an
Exquisite
Music :
Prayer
Reveals
The Divine**

**Visualises
Future
Nature of
Upashanas**

Benoyendranath's faith was supra-sectarian—the Truth above party. He spoke of it as the re-awakening of the soul, which emphatically denies that it is one more sect or denomination already existing, for it claims essentially to be a Religion of Harmony. It recognises its Divine origin and is the fulfilment of all Dispensations in the fulness of time. It is not confined to one country or one people. This is the Truth underlying his beloved Religion,—the Religion of Communion and Fellowship. Benoyendranath went on preaching this Faith of his, through his fine speeches, discourses and study-circles. Between 1907 to 1910, he was busily active mostly among the bigger circle of students in Calcutta, through a large number of Institutions e.g. the Calcutta University Institute, the Y.M.C.A., the Students Weekly Service, the Dawn Society, the Friday Club, the Calcutta Literary Society, the Muslim Institute, the Hindu-Moslem Union Society, etc.

**Faith In
Universality
and Har-
mony :
Communion
and Fellow-
ship**

In 1909, Benoyendranath was invited to preside over the Theistic Conference during X'mas, at Lahore. His 'relative-friend' had the good fortune of accompanying him there and thus to be in close touch with the proceedings of the Conference. Benoyendranath had just

lost his father on the 10th December, and was in mourning, when he got the invitation. He was then passing his time in deep communion with the Supreme Soul and with his prayerful father in His bosom.

He accepted the invitation as a Divine Call and felt an intense urge within to be with his brothers in faith, in the service of the *Mandali* and his God. The daily family *Upashanas* then, were usually being conducted by Benoyendranath, revealing visions of the other world and meant a new birth to all present. In the midst of his family duties for the occasion, Benoyendranath could snatch very little time to get his presidential address ready. He gave himself up to the Supreme Spirit to reveal itself through it, from the depth of his soul.

During his journey in train, he was in a calm contemplative mood, deeply immersed within himself, in communion with the Spirit and invoking His blessings for the success of the duties that lay before him. As the train entered the Land of the Five Rivers, one could gather from his stray expressions that he was possessed with the spirit of the ancient *Aryabarta*. The beauties of the surrounding nature and the radiance of the bright Orb rising on the horizon in all its glorious splendour, reminded him of the chanting of the Vedas by the Rishis in the glory of the shining deities. The remembrances flashed through his mind and the glow of the rising sun was reflected on his face and he sat as if in a trance. Reaching Lahore, he moved in the spirit of the land of the universal *Arati* of the Formless by Guru Nanak, the prophetic vision of Harmony through Hindu-Moslem unity of Kabir,—the earnest Theist. He breathed in the atmosphere of freedom of Guru Govinda and the valiant Sikhs.

Lala Kashiram, the Chairman of the Reception Committee,—full of life and vigour, represented the soul of the Punjab having its re-birth in the spirit of New Age. He was all cordiality in his welcome to Benoyendranath.

The extempore Presidential address was highly il-

Gives
Himself
up to the
Supreme
Spirit

In Tune With
Land of Five
Rivers

luminative, profoundly spiritual and came out direct from the depth of his heart. The eloquence was not only in Benoyendranath's musical voice, but it flashed through his bright eyes, beaming looks—nay, his whole being looked animated with the Spirit within. The speech spread a charming spell over the audience. He started with pointing out that the fundamental problems of Humanity at present were economic, political and religious,—the last being the most acute and its solution most difficult.

**Presidential
Address :
The Whole
Being
Spoke :**

Religion to be a power, must be real, vital, living creative and re-generating force. The obstacles standing on the way were not far to seek. On the one hand, with our deplorable lack of enthusiasm for holy life and various lapses in our character, we are far from rising up to the occasion. On the other hand, the task facing us is formidable. There are abject superstitions and conservatism all round and appalling ignorance amongst the teeming millions in this vast land of ours, whose low standard of lives has to be raised. Best endeavours must be made to keep Religion pure, mainly through spread of education. This was essentially the primary thing necessary for preparing the ground for the propagation of our Faith, called 'Theism'.

**Problems of
Religion :
Standards to
be Raised**

The Brahmo Samaj is a new awakening of the creation and an uplifting lever of great educative value. This alone can call up the divinity in man, to work itself out in life and in all its movements. It is a new creation in spirit. As matter stands, it is yet confined to a mere handful of educated people. It is of the highest importance to work with patient devotion, specially amongst those of the country folk, to whom the light of civilisation has not yet reached. The word 'Depressed' Class was a term not to be found in Benoyendranath's dictionary. It was more depressing than enlivening, as it kills the soul. In the proper atmosphere of good-will, and reverence, the lost soul is always redeemed,—free and pure. Only these can unfold the God in men,—in all His manifestation in life and nature. We may be

**A New
Awakening :
An up-lift-
ing Lever !**

weak, but Prayer and Faith will give us strength and vitality. Faith in Providence and in His Dispensation—is of prime necessity.

Benoyendranath did not touch any topic on which he did not throw a new light,—his own light derived from the Eternal Light in his soul. He concluded with a fervent appeal for an abiding faith in our ideal and in Providence, who will fulfil Himself in His own inscrutable ways, through our Prayers and Faith. He quoted—

“In the Faith,—our hearts shall never falter.

T’was faith in man, ’twas faith in God

T’was faith in Truth and Beauty,

In Reason’s right, and Freedom’s might

And all-controlling Duty.”

Prayer,
Faith and a
New Light

Through the richness of his thoughts, poetic vision, artistic expression, he portrayed in his address, the manifold beauties of human nature, as also the surrounding dark cloud that obscure it. In it, he made the past live back in the present and narrate its own story and the future to be born before its time, to throw a new light on all past and present drawn out of its unknown infinitude.

Freedom—
Gospel
Of ‘The
Age.

Benoyendranath also delivered a public lecture on—‘Freedom—the Gospel of the Age: The Old and the New Order’. He started with Hegel’s famous dictum,—“Personality, the greatest discovery of the Age”. In fact, if courage, temperance, moderation and wisdom were the virtues of the ancient Greeks, if obedience, celibacy, humility and poverty, in short—asceticism was the virtue of the Ancient India, and of the Middle Ages in the West,—‘Liberty, Equality and Fraternity’, all summed up in one word—‘Personality’, with its dignity and glory, as fullness of life as a Divine Right, constitute the virtue of modern life of Community and Society. But the new birth of Personality in the spirit of Freedom, has however no license for unbridled Free Will. It has been ordained by Providence, that this freedom has to be tempered and regulated by bowing down to His Will, as revealed by the voice of conscience,—the ins-

piring voice of the loving God, living within. To lead a life of Inspiration, derived through the voice of conscience,—is the Gospel of the Age.*

For the unfolding of human life unto free Divine Life, it is necessary that the undesirable and pernicious shackles of the family, the society and the government must be removed, so that the God in man and Humanity may work in unison, in an atmosphere of Freedom. In ancient times, Community came first and the Individual had to work for his livelihood in a singular groove channeled by the Society. But for his gains in the after-life, the Individual had to strive for himself for his own salvation. In the present Age, the pattern of things is however just the other way about. For one's worldly life he is free to choose his own vocation, but to enter the heavenly abode, the Individual must live, move and have his being for the good of Humanity, (একাকী যাইলে পথে, নাহি পরিত্রাণ রে!) —there is no salvation for the selfish lonely,—as our Sangeetacharya Chiranjib Trailokyanath Sanyal has sung.

Personality
Humanity

On the way back to Calcutta, a few days were spent at Delhi, Agra and Varanasi. At Delhi, he was the guest of the Principal of the Hindu College and visited the famous sites there. His historical studies found

* These ideas of Benoyendranath in a new light reminds one, of the sense of sayany in the Brihad-Aranyak Upanishads—3/7/15, 16/20/22.

যঃ সর্বেষু ভূতেষু তিষ্ঠন্ সর্বভোজ্যভূতেভ্যোহন্তরো যঃ সর্বাণি ভূতানি ন বিদুর্ষস্ত
সর্বাণি ভূতানি শরীরং যঃ সর্বাণি ভূতান্তরো যময়তি এষ ত আত্মাহন্ত-
র্ধাম্যমৃতীতি । ১৫

যঃ প্রাণে তিষ্ঠন্ প্রাণাদন্তরো যঃ প্রাণো ন বেদ যস্ত প্রাণঃ
শরীরং যঃ প্রাণমন্তরো যময়ত্যেষ ত আত্মা অন্তর্ধাম্যমৃতঃ । ১৬

যো মনসি তিষ্ঠন্ মনসোহন্তরো যঃ মনো ন বেদ যস্ত মনঃ
শরীরং যো মনোহন্তরো যময়ত্যেষ ত আত্মাহন্তর্ধাম্যমৃতঃ । ২০

যো বিজ্ঞানে তিষ্ঠন্ বিজ্ঞানাদন্তরো যঃ বিজ্ঞানং ন বেদ যস্ত
বিজ্ঞানং শরীরং যো বিজ্ঞানমন্তরো যময়ত্যেষ ত আত্মাহন্তর্ধাম্যমৃতঃ । ২২

Taj-Mahal
Feast For
The Soul

ready at hand the vast wealth of illustrations. After Delhi, Agra was visited. During the short stay there, practically the whole day and much of the night time were spent at the Taj,—the other sights being more or less neglected. The eyes and the poetic soul, both feasted themselves on the very picture of beauty in white marbles—the Taj Mahal. The disposition of the stones and their resplendent glaze of the polish, brought out the ‘brightest piece of art of the biggest magnitude’,—‘conceived by the Titans and finished by fine Jewellers’. The craftsman used their chisels with hands of faith and reverence and brought out the form out of the soul of beauty. The heavenly sight had a fresh splendour and play of colours with every change in the weather and at every flight of the hour, by the touch of the wand of the heavenly Magician, as it were, Dusky twilight of early dawn, the mellowed scarlet of the rising sun, the pure white of the blazing noon, the glorious crimson of the setting sun and blurred haziness of starlit nights or flood of moon-shine—all produced a Kaleidoscopic change of variegated hues.

A Strange
Economist :

In the Agra Hotel, a merchant came with a big bundle of locally-made carpets. Benoyendranath selected some and paid rupees fifty as advance, with instructions to send them along to Calcutta, per V.P.P. for the remaining dues. There was no bargaining about the prices, although he was advised by his fellow-boarders to ascertain the proper value from the market. Benoyendranath’s feeling reply was—“Brothers, these are priceless ! It is too sad, that all the fine indigenous Arts and Industries of India are dying out for lack of patronage and unhealthy competition”. And this strange exposition of economic principles of Ruskinian doctrine from the Cobden Gold-Medallist of his year ! When challenged about his wisdom in the payment of the advance to an unknown man, his reply was still more striking. He said that in the business world, it was trust that alone could make people worthy of it ; and if the merchant did really know his job, he would certainly

behave as an honest man. Benoyendranath was right in his estimate of the character of men and all the carpets did duly reach him in Calcutta. Trust all, and trust begets trust; have faith in God and in men too, and through faith alone the social life, family life, and the character of every individual—find solid foundations.

In his long teaching career, this 'relative-friend' of Benoyendranath used to bow to the students while entering the class in a spirit more of learning than of teaching, before they would stand up to receive him. Who knows there may be some Socrates, Shakespeare, Newton, Garibaldi or Keshabchandra among them,—their genius waiting to be unfolded and bloom in time, through the blessings of Providence. The living God, the Creator, living in man is a living faith, but a loving faith in man, the created as well, was forcefully expressed, by Benoyendranath. This revealed in him his supreme love for the man, bordering on the divine. and showed the depth of his faith in the divinity of Love.*

Faith in
Humanity
As in
Creator

The Theistic conference held its sitting in Calcutta in 1911. Benoyendranath came out with all the stirrings of the soul and depth of his mind, in Upasanas and lectures on the occasion.

Benoyendranath, even when a boy at School, would spend some hours in the evening in the open air to be in contact with Nature,—sometimes on the open grassy plots in the Maidan or by the river-side. This habit continued till his last illness shut him up within his room. Just before that, when his health had broken down he revived his old habit of evening-walks, with care and regularity, after the University Institute duties, and he would be out sometimes in the Maidan till night had far advanced.

*পঞ্চদশী তত্ত্ব বিবেক—

“ইয়মন্তো পরানন্দঃ পরপ্রেমাম্পদং যতঃ”

মান ভূনং হি ভূয়াস যেতি প্রেমাত্মনীয়তে ।

Right and
Not Afraid.
Faces Diffi-
culties with
Courage &
Dignity

While alone strolling in deep contemplation, he would forget the hour. Sir Gurudas, who occasionally accompanied Benoyendranath in his evening outings, warned him about the dangers of being alone in the Maidan after dusk, as the soldiers from the fort might cause trouble. Benoyendranath's bold reply was that he would not care, so long as he was within his rights. But trouble did come to him on two occasions. Once some Polices patrol took him to the nearest Police Station. The Officer-in-charge recognised Benoyendranath and at once let him go, with sincere apologies. On another occasion, a few soldiers in the Maidan were very rude to him and on his remonstrations, he was brought before their officer. The officer was very much impressed by the stately bearing and dignified talks of Benoyendranath and as soon as he came to know that the arrested man was a professor of the Presidency College, he at once apologised and compelled the ill-mannered soldiers to apologise too. Disciplinary action was taken against them. If Benoyendranath was sweet and gentle by nature, he could meet all the difficult situations of life with courage and dignity.

Three
Memorable
Upashanas

Benoyendranath, in the fullness of life in Spirit, served his *Mandali* with quite a number of soul-stirring Upashanas and inspiring sermons from the pulpit of the Bharatbarsiya Brahma Mandir. This has already been referred to. From amongst these, three memorable ones come uppermost in the mind. These price-less gifts in the shape of *Upashanas* came from him just before he took to bed, owing to his fatal illness. On these occasions, he was really at his best. The first one was on 25th January, 1912, on the main Utsab day,—the last festival which he could join in this life. For his Sermon—'The Fulfilment of Heart's Desire', (আকাঙ্ক্ষা পূরণ) he took as his Text, the famous passage from the Bhagabat, in which *Bhagaban* says to His *Bhakta*, that He could not give to His *Bhakta* anything short of the touches of His own lotus-like feet—the very Beauty itself which keeps the soul of the *Bhakta* enraptured in

absolute self-forgetfulness of enthralling joy. And through this, the *Bhakta* gets all.*

The concluding portion of the sermon reveals a new facet of Benoyendranath's character. Gokhale declared that the country would have profited a lot had Benoyendranath entered into active politics. Yet, Benoyendranath was a true patriot. What a deep love he bore for his mother-land is clearly indicated in the last few lines of the above Sermon.**

Deep Love
For Mother-
Land

To the great seer Benoyendranath, true freedom is based on Truth and Morality and is presented to us through His benediction, to be picked up as a pure flower from His feet.

Surprisingly enough, this love for Truth and Morality was in him from his early life. He believed that *reform of man should head the list of all reform bills*

*সকল অভিলাষের পরিসমাপ্তিকর নিজ পদ-পল্লব, স্বয়ং প্রদান করেন।

আকিঞ্চনস্ত, দাস্তস্ত, শাস্তস্ত সমচেতসঃ

ময়া সন্তুষ্টমনসঃ সর্বাঃ সুখময়া দিশঃ ॥ ১৩ ॥

ন পারমেষ্ঠ্যং ন মহেন্দ্রবিধ্যাং

ন সার্বভৌমং ন রসাধিপত্যম্।

ন যোগসিদ্ধীরপূনর্ভবং বা

ময্যর্পিতাশ্চেনচ্ছতি মদ্বিনাস্তৎ ॥ ১৪ ॥

নিরপেক্ষং মুনিং শাস্তং নির্বৈরং সমদর্শনম্

অমৃতব্রজাম্যহং নিত্যং পুণ্যেয্যেত্যজিৎপুণ্ড্রিভিঃ ॥ ১৫ ॥

নিকিঞ্চনা ময্যমৃতকুচেতসঃ

শাস্তা মহাস্তোত্রখিল লোক-বৎসলাঃ

কামৈরনালঙ্ঘন্যো জুযস্তি তে

যমৈরপেক্ষ্যং ন বিদুঃ সুখং মম ॥ ১৬ ॥

শ্রীমদ্ভাগবত ১০।১৪।১৬।১৭

**“দেশকে উন্নত করতে হবে। সকল জাতির সভার মধ্যে এই পতিত দেশকে এনে সম্মানের আসনে বসাতে হবে। আমাদের জীবনের সমস্ত প্রেম ভক্তি ভগবানের চরণে সমর্পণ করি। তাঁরই আশীর্বাদে, তাঁরই পাদস্পর্শ পেয়ে, আমাদের ভারতবর্ষ জগত সভায় তার উপযুক্ত স্থান লাভ করুক।”

for the country. The entry in his Diary, as early as 16th January, 1892, would be interesting indeed—

“Instances of corruption at isolated points are but clear indications of the volcanic materials that have accumulated under the surface, through thousands of miles. Who knows but the slight puff of smoke that now excites our curiosity, is one day to over-spread the whole sky, and amidst the agonised cries and shrieks of stifled souls, a whole nation is to be buried under heaps of ruins and ashes? On liberty, and self-government, and political rights,—the Congress resolutions we have had enough. *But of what avail are these amongst a people, most of whom, from the highest to the lowest, live in an atmosphere of the narrowest selfishness, and the most unrestrained self-indulgence?* Oh! for the voice of a Mazzini to teach this benighted people, that in every true national development, *the conception of Duty must always precede and regulate the conception of Right*.* Oh; for the pen of a Carlyle to preach in these days of thoughtless superficiality, the great truth in the real march of progress,—the reform of the *man* must always precede and regulate the reform of *institution*!”

Premdas, the minstrel Chiranjib (Trailokya Nath Sanyal) of the Nababidhan, also beautifully put this idea in his song**

The other two memorable *Upashanas*, referred to before, have become almost classical to the *Mandali*. Both of them were under the shadow of deep tragedy, just a year before the pilgrim's 'journey's end'. This back-ground gave Benoyendranath the best opportunity to be all himself, with his soul charged with the deepest feeling of sympathy for the suffering humanity.

Of these two, one was on 26th April, 1912, 'In

* Nothing is truer in the present time.

**স্বাধীন হইবে যদি, তবে সত্য পথে চল ;
স্বার্থ-সুখ পরিহরি, চরিত্র কর নির্মল ।
হও আগে জিতেন্দ্রিয়, কৰ্মনিষ্ঠ, সত্যপ্রিয় ;
তাহলে পাবে নিশ্চয়, প্রকৃত স্বাধীন বল ।

Memoriam' to the great Titanic 'disaster, that gripped the whole world, in a vice, as it were. The biggest vessel of the world at that time, belonging to the Star Line, built with the best equipments of modern science (fondly called—the 'un-sinkable' by its owners), with two thousand passengers on board, struck a hidden iceberg and sank on its very maiden voyage.

The Titanic
Disaster :

The *Upashana* was in English. The audience was large, consisting of all shades of life. Benoyendranath took the famous hymn,—'Nearer, My God to Thee, nearer to Thee', as the text for the feeling sermon. This refrain from the music was struck up by the band of the crew, standing in knee-deep water on the deck, just before the final plunge. The whole crowd of passengers on the deck, face to face with imminent death, sung in unison, with a harmonious blending of their souls in admirable chivalry, fortitude, sacrifice and faith. With Prayers in their souls, —Death was a Beauty for gods to see.

Nearer My
God To
Thee :
Nearer to
Thee.
Death a
Beauty

The remembrance of his own experience of sighting an ice-berg, while crossing the Atlantic, six years before on board the 'Celtic'—the then biggest ship, must have added grimness and pathos to his description of the tragic disaster. With the uncertainty of human life and the bright picture of its spirit of surrender to His Will and the grandeur of the human life, facing death and disaster, with calmness and faith in His Grace, brought forth to his mind, the pertinent query—"Would you have all chances of accident eliminated, but men loveless, soul-less or have the world full of sacrificing beautiful souls, though there may be now and then, some calamities to make faith shine forth all the brighter?" In the *Upashana*, behind the vision of the furious dance of Death, shone forth His benignant face and the whole congregation joined him in the prayer to the Benevolent and the Merciful—"Thy will be done"!

Faith
Shines
Brighter :
'Thy Will
Be Done'

The other *Upashana* referred to, had a personal touch about it. It was a usual weekly *Upashana* in the mandir to be conducted by Benoyendranath, as by pre-

vious routine arrangement. Dr. Paresh Ranjan Roy was the Health Officer of the Alipur District of the Calcutta Corporation and was as dear to Benoyendranath as a brother. Pareshranjan contracted Plague and fell seriously ill and passed away on the 7th April, that very Sunday.

Dr. Paresh-
ranjan's
Self-
Sacrifice

It was the time of the *Ardhodaya Joga* and a big crowd of bathers was expected at the Kalighat Adi-Ganga. Pareshranjan was very busy for the necessary Sanitary arrangements in the locality, which was in the grip of an epidemic of Plague at that time. There was so much accumulation of filth and garbage that the street sweepers were hesitating to do their job. To put enthusiasm in the work, Pareshranjan himself took up the cudgels.

Leela with
Babe's
Smiles

Benoyendranath left the death-bed for the *mandir* and in fact, he was on the pulpit when the remains of his dear one was on its way to the cremation ground. Benoyendranath was deprived of the satisfaction of accompanying the body. The saddest thing stirs the heart most and his aradhana of the spirit of love (প্রেমস্বরূপ) was particularly beautiful and touching. A clear vision of the union of life here and in the here-after, of the present-day world and the one beyond the ocean of time, in the bosom of the All-loving Mother, was before him and this was reflected on the minds of the congregation, through the *Upashana*. Pareshranjan left two tiny daughters behind him and one wonders if Benoyendranath was having the shadow cast before of his own empty room, a year after, with his only daughter a year old, crying for him. He sought to understand the *Leela* of Providence, in robbing sweet little babies of their smiles (‘শিশুর মুখের হাসি কেড়ে নাও, এ কী লীলা তোমার ?’)

Love for children was always one of his deep sentiments, which would unconsciously express itself in so many lovely forms. He was closely interested in child-psychology. Beautiful pictures, toys and interesting edu-

cative books would always be kept handy for presentation to the nephews and the nieces—and there were quite a crowd of them. Whenever they would come to their *mama-bari*, during holidays, a trip to the zoo, with its concomitant elephant-rides and monkey-feedings, in the company of their dear *Bara Mama* was a permanent feature of their entertainment. This would give him great delight,—and all of them in the new dresses presented by him. And what anxious restless nights he would pass, whenever he learnt of the illness of any of his dear young ones. From Calcutta would regularly flow his valuable instructions to the parents to be mindful of their wards. His heart was always distressed to find their discomforts in any shape. His room was always a welcome resort for them and “suffer little children to come unto me, for their’s the Kingdom of Heaven”—that was the spirit that marked his ways towards them.

Suffer Little
Children to
Come unto
Me

Scarcely did one find so much tears in his eyes, so profound emotion in him, though appearing calm and restful from outside. The other close approach to this, as remembered by his old friend, was on the 8th January of 1884, when he was standing by the side of Keshabchandra’s bier. Benoyendranath’s biographer has summarised the salient features of his character as—‘genius’, ‘culture’, ‘humility’, ‘prayerfulness’, ‘Yoga’ and ‘Keshab-infatuation’. It was infatuation indeed—deep silent, all-absorbing attraction. Nobody however heard Keshabchandra’s name in his lips. Keshab was always referred to by Benoyendranath, as his—‘One’ or ‘He’ and on that sad day, streams of tears welled out from his eyes while standing by the remains of his, ‘Him’. So was his flow of tears, with remembrances of Pareshranjan.

Flood of
Tears for
his ‘Him’
and for
Pareshranjan

It is rather surprising that the above two sad events,—the sinking of the ‘unsinkable’ Titanic and the sudden close of his dear Pareshranjan’s beautiful life, were only about a year before the sinking of his own life into Eternity and the ebbing away of his own nurturing

stream in the fathomless ocean, (প্রাণরাম সাগর) the perennial source of Joy.

Life in Im-
mortality :
Banished
For Home

Benoyendranath lived in immortality with thoughts about his real 'Home', all the time. About ten years earlier, in another of his outstanding sermons—'Banished for Home', delivered at the same place, also in English, he said that life here is very short and the earth is not the home. In the banishment from the earthly abode, comes a release from bondage and then commences the voyage of the life-barge for 'Home', which is the land of the infinite bliss and joy,—in the contemplation of beauty and peace derived from self-consecration, that comes through cease-less prayer. The concluding lines, beautiful as they are, clearly express his feelings—

Shall Meet
Again : As
Children
of God

"Here am I the poor wandering Pilgrim through a world, where lights and shadows are constantly mingling. I find a few comrades by my side, in the heights and solitude to which the spirit calls me, bearing the perpetual obligation to trust all, to love all, to serve all. Here is an exile, under God's blessings, banished from all Earth's moorings, destined for a 'Home', where when all Earth's illusions drop off, we shall meet together, as the children of God."

Benoyendranath's emphasis was more on the conduct of life. Here are some of his beautiful thoughts recorded in his Diary on—'Before the great Silence', as early as 1895 and 1896—

Emphasis on
Life : Not
Step of
Death in
which—
known
Mingles with
Unknown

"I have often felt disposed to question, why people should attach so much importance to the foot-steps of death, and not upon the whole tenor of their lives, God has not forsaken us. How infinitely near His Spirit is to ours. There can be nothing to disturb that consciousness, to the day of our death. Yea, even we would that our whole life may be such that this consciousness may be the deepest and the sweetest at that awful moment, when the known mingles with the Unknown, and our life sinks into the Great Void of Eternity. Happy is the man in whom no tinge of anxiety is mixed up with this

thought. Oh, God ! with a calm dependence upon Thy love, let me take up the humble duties of my life, and bless me, that I may be faithful unto death."

"What a blessed experience it is, to feel oneself so near to death. All the vanities, and misgivings, and gropings of the mind are hushed and stilled. Am I fit to be ushered into the depths of Eternity ? There is only one deep-seated unrest in my soul—I had a trust to fulfil, and I have yet done nothing to fulfil it—a particular debt of love and devotion and gratitude, sealed and witnessed unto, by all my highest aspirations and efforts, by all that is heavenly and divine in my nature, by all that is purest, noblest and best in my ideal of humanity,—a special claim upon my whole nature, and life and powers and energies, which remains unanswered. Nothing can mitigate the anguish of the thought of passing away from the world without fulfilling this trust."

A Trust to
Fulfil Debt
to Repay

"In every thought and act one ought so to hold oneself, as if one was going to die this very day. If one had a good conscience, he would not much fear death. It would be more to the purpose, to shun sin than to flee from death. What profit is it to us to live long, when we make such a poor use of our time ? Ah ! a long life does not always bring with it amendment but it often increases our guilt. 'Blessed is he who has always before his eyes the hour of death, and daily disposes himself for death',—So said, Thomas A. Kempis. To-day the cloud has passed away. But bless me, Father, that I may never forget Thy warning, or lapse again into the sin from which Thou hast raised me."

Shun Sin :
Fear Not
Death

But was there any fore-boding in his mind, while mourning over the Titanic disaster and the loss of his dear Pareshranjan, about his own immediate destiny ? Otherwise, why the soft tremor of his voice, why that deep cry from the anguished soul, why the welling tears of the broken heart during the *Upasana*,—that so deeply moved all ? Were these premonitions of his own feeling that was to follow while bearing his own cross with calm resignation,—foregetting his pain only through

Foreboding
and Pre-
monition ?

(নামামৃত মহোষধ) the panacea nectar of the Holy remembrances? Was the heavenly glow on his face an expression of the fore-taste of the bliss of meeting his 'Pilot, face to face', while 'crossing the Bar' and entering his 'Home',—the abode of his Father, at His Call?

In 1911, Benoyendranath was appointed as the University Inspector of Colleges, in the place of Dr. P. K. Roy, when the latter became the Advisor to the Indian students, then in England. And Benoyendranath was to step into that position too, on Dr. Roy's retirement; but Providence ordained otherwise. Justice Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee, the then Vice-Chancellor of the University,—a real connoisseur of genius, would select the right man in the right place. Once he made up his mind to have Benoyendranath for the post, he at once set the ball rolling. He would not allow grass to grow under his feet and secured the necessary permissions of the Education department of the Government and the Principal of the Presidency College about the lending of the service of Benoyendranath.

University
Inspector
of Colleges

One evening, after the Senate Meeting, he drew Benoyendranath gently aside and broke the news to him. Sir Ashutosh expected that the prospect of the new appointment, with an emolument more than three times of what he was enjoying then, would be a very pleasant surprise for Benoyendranath. The latter had not the faintest idea about the proposed arrangement before and was not at all prepared for it. It was however a bolt from the blue for him, as he was in his best spirits and health at that time and devoting himself heart and soul for the good of the students of Calcutta.

Benoyendranath hesitated to accept the offer, but Sir Ashutosh was not a man to take a 'NO' easily. Coming to know the reason of the hesitation, the learned Lawyer in him convinced Benoyendranath, with his irresistible arguments, that Benoyendranath's sphere of service to the students and the country would be definitely increased through the proposed new post, instead

of being confined to a few students in Calcutta. Through the new appointment, he would be coming in contact with a large number of students under his supervision and it would enable him to find out whether the teaching all over Bengal was in the right track and to suggest basic improvements in the present system. He would thus be of better service to a larger number. Benoyendranath had to bow down to the decision of Sir Ashutosh and took over charges in the University the very next day. The stage was completely set by Sir Ashutosh and Benoyendranath had just to step in.

**Sir Ashutosh
Irresistible**

He adjusted himself to the new work with its great possibilities and was highly successful there. The influence of his noble character spread all over Bengal, during his frequent tours for inspection. But his students and colleagues of the Presidency College felt very sad about the parting and consoled themselves with the fond hope that they will again get back their dear Professor among them, soon. But alas! that was not to be. Benoyendranath left his dear college and never returned to it again. The taking up of the new duty was the beginning of his end.

**Greater
Good to
Larger
Numbers**

For Benoyendranath, it may be said that the call came at this time from his 'Home' to throw off the mortal coil and to march into the eternal Pilgrimage. To him, a bountiful and perfect life in eternity, in other embodiments of the same spirit in higher regions,—was a reality.

**Life In
Eternity :
A Reality**

His hard strenuous work in rejuvenating the University Institute and constant tours as University Inspector of Colleges, caused severe strains for him and began to tell on his fine constitution. It may be said that he literally dedicated himself to the University Institute and to the student community at large, for the matter of that. Often he would go there straight from the College, without changing his cloth, without refreshments, without the necessary rest and return home late at night. And how often would he be reprimanded by his dear old father for being careless about himself. In spite of these warnings and anxious entreaties of his devoted wife

**Heavy
Strains :
Beginning
of the End**

Sakuntala Debi, he continued in the discharge of his duties and the result in spite of the tender care of everybody was, that his health broke down.

At this time Benoyendranath began to suffer from dyspepsia and pain in the abdomen. At first he brushed these aside as mere result of irregular dietary. But soon it was found that something serious has been the matter with him and he was placed under regular medical treatment. He had to take to bed from the middle of 1912, as the pain became intense and his dyspepsia grew worse. He would not be allowed any more to neglect himself. But unfortunately it was rather too late. He appeared to be slowly sinking in health.

Benoyendranath's life was great and great were the endeavours to save it. All through his illness, he was placed under the best medical treatment. The doctors vied with each other in their enthusiasm to cure him, at least to provide some relief from the acute pain. But all attempts were of no avail to do him any good. Such a galaxy of the medical luminaries were rarely to be found by the side of any sick-bed. Among the physicians were,—Col. R. L. Dutta, Sir Nilratan Sarkar, Col. Brown, Col. Lukis, Purna Chandra Nandi, Pran Dhona Bose, Bindhan Chandra Roy and others. The Surgeons were Col. Bird, Col. Stevens, Col. Suresh Prasad Sarbadhikary, Col. Karuna Kumar Chatterjee, Mrigendra Lal Mitra, Suresh Chandra Bhattacharjya. Dr. Ajit Mohan Bose came in for Electro-Therapy. At one time there was a sign of some improvement but no lasting result could be achieved. The diagnosis was difficult at the early stage. Col. R. L. Dutta thought it was a Pancreatic disorder and the treatment and dietary were in that line for some time. At last it was suspected as a case of Malignancy (cancer) inside the abdomen.

Benoyendranath was sent down to Giridih in August, for a change. The natural scenery of the place was charming. He was put up at the house 'Tripti Kutir', belonging to his friend and admirer—Sree Amrita Lall Ghose. It was beautifully situated on the river side, in the midst

Takes to
Bed June,
1912

Galaxy of
Medical
Luminaries :
Great Enthu-
siasm to
Save a
Great Life

of a big garden full of flowers. All comforts were provided by his obliging host and there was some sign of apparent improvement in health, but it was more mental than physical. 'Tripti Kutir' did give him some *tripti*, but Alas! one day he fainted while strolling in the garden after family prayers. His brother Dr. Satyendranath rushed down to Giridhi along with Dr. Matilal Mukherjee (a Retired Civil Surgeon), Sir Nilratan Sarkar, Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy and Dr. Banku Behari Chowdhury and Benoyendranath was brought back to Calcutta in October, much the worse after the change. Probably due to his freedom in the open air, he was moving about too much in Nature's companionship.

Tripti
Kutir
and the
Tripti

After the Allopaths, the eminent Homeopaths like D. N. Roy, Chandra Sekhar Kali and Pratap Chandra Majumder and Younan, took charge of the case. Lastly, Benoyendranath was under the care of the best Kavirajes of the day,—Syamadas Bachaspati, Bejoy Ratna Sen, Mahamahopadhyaya Ganatan Sen and others. But the case went from bad to worse and Benoyendranath was gradually losing strength and vitality.

Experienced
Homeopaths
and
Kabirajes

The pain was excruciating as was evident from the drops of tears trickling down the corners of his eyes. But there were no groans or other outward expressions of pain and he was bearing his Cross calmly. He wore a loving smile on the face and did not even lose his natural gentle humour. One evening, Captain Godson, the Governor's Surgeon came to examine Benoyendranath,—an arrangement through the courtesy of the Maharani Sucharu Debi of Maurbhanj. Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, then a young M.R.C.P. and F.R.C.S., fresh from England, was with him. Capt. Godson was struck with the gentle manner in which Dr. Roy was handling the case. Benoyendranath remarked smilingly—"Ah Captain, you would not have been surprised at all, had you known what stock Dr. Roy comes from. Both his parents were saintly persons. Naturally, Dr. Roy must have the touch of an angel. His name Bidhan itself, given by his parent Aghore-Prakash in remembrance of the ideal life of their

Calmly
Bears the
Cross

Subtle
Humour
Not Lost

Nababidhan, which signifies a blending of *Yoga*, *Bhakti*, *Karma* and *Jnana*.

Sir Nilratan's
Loving
Gesture to
Save
'National
Asset'

At last a sort of a conference of all the leading doctors was held over his case. The Surgeons suggested Benoyendranath to be taken over to England for operation. Sir Nilratan who was the presiding genius at the meeting, did not like the idea, as he thought that the case was far too advanced. But afterwards, the Surgeons having insisted that operation was the only course left open to them, Sir Nilratan agreed to the suggestion and said that even if there was any faintest chance, they should try to save such a valuable life at any cost, as it was a national asset. He himself offered to stand all the expense in this connection and said he would consider it a proud privilege and pleasure for him, if he is permitted to do so. Expenses should not be of any consideration in the case of a representative man of India and its rich treasure. But Benoyendranath, with his usual grace and humility—the gifts of his spirit, declined Sir Nilratan's sporting offer with thanks and apologies.

Declined
with Grace
& Humility

Benoyendranath's brother, Dr. Satyendranath then came forward and was about to arrange for his own leave to enable him to accompany his brother to England. But when Benoyendranath came to know that the chances of his recovery was not even one per cent, he put an emphatic 'No' to the proposal. But he would not hurt his brother's feelings and he smilingly enquired if it would be possible to arrange a big vessel to carry the family and his friends along with him ; for he would like very much to be in their midst at the last hour. The lines from Poet Dwijendra Lall Roy's song — এই দেশেতে জন্ম যেন এই দেশেতে মরি — "This is my dear place of birth and let me breathe my last here, please,"—were often on his lips at that time. Needless to say, that during the long course of his illness, all the medical services rendered were works of selfless love of his devoted friends and admirers,—everyone of whom was equally enthusiastic in his duty.

Breathe My
Last—
Where
Born

And so days went on for about a year and the malady got worse from day to day. The pain was excruciating but the calm fortitude and prayerful resignation with which he was bearing all his troubles were extraordinary. They revealed the brave man of faith that he was—a life-long worshipper of Truth, the Beneficent and the Beauty. He would not like to have any potent drug to lull his pain unless it was also expected to bring about some real improvement in the malady itself. He hankered for a full dose of the nectar of life —*নামামৃত* the name of the Holy Spirit,—the panacea of all physical maladies and healing balm to bring peace and tranquillity. The immediate effect of administration of divine name would be found in the heavenly radiance which shot forth from his sunken eyes.

Brave
Prayerful
Man of
Faith :
Worshipper
of Satyam,
Shivam &
Sundaram

The picture of Christ on the Cross was on the wall before his eyes and from it he would draw strength and inspiration to bear his Cross nobly. As the days wore on, his face beamed with a glow—joy of the re-birth in God. This 'relative-friend' of his used to come to him from Krishnagar on week-ends. Benoyendranath would like him to read out the chapter of the Mahabharat, depicting the scene of Bhishma lying on the bed of sharp arrows, in pain and thirst, asking his relations and grandchildren for drops of water from mother Ganges to moisten his parched lips. The chanting from the Mahabharat evidently meant some strength to his faith, as did the picture of Christ on the Cross. There was a similarity between the two scenes, which bore such a close resemblance to his own sick-bed.

Strength
from
Pictures
of the
Cross and
'Sara-
Sajya'

At this time, his fifth brother Debendranath bought a nice present of an Arm-chair, for his comfort. Benoyendranath was all smile and felt like a child given a toy or a piece of candy. Even during his grim struggle with disease, Benoyendranath did not lose his loving consideration for others, which marked his character all through his life. Debendranath was asked not to forget his 'relative-friend' but make him comfortable too by a

Glee over
Brother's
Present

Even They
are not
Forgotten

present of a warm over-coat, to protect him against the chilly February nights in the train. The over-coat is still an heir-loom to the family.

For about a year or so, he was laid up in his bed in this way. Only on three occasions did he leave his house during the last stage. He went out once, in June 1912, to get the plan of the proposed building of the University Institute signed by Sir Ashutosh (at that time lying ill) and with that he went to the Secretariat to sign the necessary papers in connection with the sanctioned Government Grant, obtained through the help of Sir Harcourt Butler. Mr. Gourlay, the Chief Secretary, in his own carriage, accompanied Benoyendranath all the way back from the Secretariat, to see him safe home. The second occasion was, when Benoyendranath went to Giridhi in August for a short change. And the last was his 'Journey's End' on April 12th, 1913.

Three Urges
from
Within

He said that in his life, he had three calls with urges from within, which he had to obey. The first one was from across the seas, to Geneva for the International Religions Congress, when he was in the midst of various family difficulties. The second was from Lahore, to preside over the Theistic Conference, when his father was on the death-bed and the last call came from Eternity,—far beyond, across the sea of time,—the 'Pilot' waiting with the barge to carry him to his 'Home', from his wandering pilgrimage on the earth.

Dear Ones
Call with
Flowers
Songs or
Tearful
Smiles

Many of his relatives, friends and students often used to come to have a look at him, lying on the bed of thorns. Flowers and music were the two life-long passions with him,—and some would come with flowers, some would come to sing to him and some would come only with a smile, just to have a glimpse of a smile on his face in exchange. The last drama staged in the University Institute by its members, in his time, was Girish Chandra's 'Jana', Benoyendranath was too ill to be present during the performance, but the artistes, on the following evening, came to Benoyendranath's room and had the pleasure and satisfaction of playing the parts to Benoy-

endranath, by the side of the sick-bed. There were no stage-crafts nor any colourful dresses, but there could be no better set-up for the acting. Benoyendranath also was happy. At the end, Benoyendranath closed his eyes and tears trickled down his shrunken cheeks and he requested his dear Jnanapriya to sing to him his favourite song — (এ মহাসিদ্ধুর ওপার থেকে, কী সঙ্গীত ভেসে আসে) “Ah! the music comes floating from the other shore”. This was his last request to his young friends of the University Institute.

Music from
The Other
Shore

Two extraordinary events occurred during this time. One day, a Sanyasi, covered all over except the eyes with a blanket, was suddenly found at his side. He gently placed his palm on Benoyendranath's head and asked him to throw himself completely at the feet of his smiling Mother, to be relieved of all pain. He gently melted away from the room unseen, as gently as he had come in, —escaping all eyes. Those who were in the room were more or less left in a dazed condition, because of the suddenness and strangeness of the thing. Some thought that the Sanaysi was Benoyendranath's long-lost friend, his cousin's husband, who left home twenty years before.

The Sanyasi
and The
Sadhu

The second event was when some of his boy-hood friends went to see a Sadhu at Banaras, a famous fortune-teller, and who also knew of some special herbs that sometimes cured incurable cases. They wished to make a last attempt to retain the valuable life of their dear Benoy among them for sometime more. The Sadhu, as soon as he saw the party approaching him, exclaimed —“Sorry, no hope, no hope about your friend's life”. The idea of their visit to Banaras was kept a strict secret amongst themselves. No outsider could possibly have any idea of the reason behind the visit. Even members of Benoyendranath's family knew nothing about it. The friends came back only with a flood of tears, prepared for the imminent pang of separation. May be, some other party of Benoyendranath's friends with deep anxiety

writ large on their faces, visited the Sadhu, earlier or Benoyendranath was known to him.

Angelic
Soul Passes
Away

The angelic soul passed away on 12th April, 1913, early dawn, on its eternal Pilgrimage. People came in large number to the house—dear friends, admiring students, loving elders, to have a last look at the mortal remains and to express their love and adoration. The long solemn funeral procession, with the flower-bedecked bier was accompanied by many elites of the City, including venerable men like the bare-footed orthodox Brahmin. Sir Gurudas, Sir Debaprasad, Dr. Urquhart, Prof. Wordsworth, Prof. Stirling, Father Holmes and many others. It went to the Nababidhan Brahmo Mandir and then the mourners wended their way slowly to the burning-ghat for the last rites. They halted on the way at the Presidency College and the Calcutta University Institute,—his two principal fields of activity among the students. A deep silence prevailed all the way. The whole scene had a sublime appeal for all hearts. Newspapers next day were full of glowing tributes to Benoyendranath's life and his achievements. The whole of India joined in mourning him.

The feeling of deep sorrow of the *mandali* was well expressed by Sadhu T. L. Vaswani, whose widowed heart prayed to God for Benoyendranath's eternal peace and happiness in His bosom and believed that Benoyendranath was not dead, but lived in the *Sachidananda Hare*. In his 'In Memoriam' in the *mandali* organ—The World and the 'New Dispensation'. he wrote—

Mandali's
Widowed
Heart Wails

"Till I too have crossed the bar, I can but look for him in the hallowed chamber of the heart and feel the touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still."

"The music of his voice comes floating in the air from where he is,—calling me, you and all, to love the mandali, to vow solemn re-dedication of our lives to God, to a new consecration of our all to the sacred cause."

"Years ago, Benoyendranath said—'What even if thou diest without a murmur, or diest by the slow pro-

cess of long continued illness, at every step of which thou acceptest with meek resignation, the agonising pain of long-foreseen end, as benediction from the Mother. To suffer unto victory to die unto eternal life—that is the glory of God. They do not die; nor lose their mortal sympathy; nor change to us. Not finished yet, thy labours, beloved brother, though passed behind the veil thy immortal soul. I fain would keep the faith. With serene conviction in Immortality, we shall meet again at the Shrine, where the light reveals the benediction of the Beauty—that is God."

**Call for
Re-Dedica-
tion**

**They do
not Die
nor Change**

The feeling of sad disappointment of the college has been beautifully represented by Principal H. R. James, in his letter of condolence to the bereaved family. It runs thus—"It is a matter of deep sorrow that we would no more welcome Benoyendranath back to the college, nor even see him—though weak in pain, yet with the bold spirit shining through."

**Principal
James
Misses a
Bold Spirit**

Sir Ashutosh had the highest regard for Benoyendra-nath and in his Convocation Address of the year, he paid eloquent tribute to the departed soul on behalf of the University—

"Our grief is intensified in a manifold degree, when we are reminded of the loss sustained by the premature death of Prof. Benoyendranath, who has been cut off in the prime of life by a fell disease, while still in the full vigour of manhood in the plenitude of beneficent activity and with prospect of many years of useful work before him. The solidity of his learning, the soundness of his judgment, the nobility of his character, the unselfishness of his devotion to his life-long mission, made him the ideal teacher. He was held in highest reverence and deepest affection. He commanded the genuine respect of all who came in contact with him, in whatever sphere he was, whether as an instructor of youth, as a member of the Senate, the Board of Studies, the Board of Examiners, as an Inspector of Colleges or as the Secretary of that useful institute,—the Calcutta University Institute, of which he was for many years, the chief

**Sir
Ashutosh's
Regards !
Grief for the
Unfinished
Works for
Students &
Education-
ists**

guiding spirit. He has passed away and has left his life-work unfinished ; but his memory will be lovingly cherished by the future generations of students and educationists."

Incomplete
Picture
Without
Glimpses
of Sweet
Partnership

No picture of Benoyendranath's life would be complete, if we miss out the sweet partnership of his devoted wife in it. With her eyes of faith, she could see the features of her husband on the sick-bed transformed into Yogic Poise of a saint (রোগ-শয্যা যোগাসনে পরিণত). She clearly did realise how Benoyendranath ever lived in the Mother's bosom. With what admirable resignation she passes her days, patiently trudging along the road that leads to region of perpetual union with her husband, since his departure from this world !

Sick Bed &
Yogic Poise

Her
Upashanas

Her Upashanas since then, were in solitary silence with her dear one by her side in spirit, and these could only be heard and enjoyed by others afterwards, as spiritual repast,—her soul flowing out as a spring of love in communion with her beloved, towards the Divine. We can have a taste of the poetry in the depth of her soul, from her sweet song of a prayer, on the occasion of her husband's Sradh Ceremony. It was sweetest because it came out saddest from her anguished heart. This, one can never forget—

Poetry of
a Prayer

"This shore and the other one, of the eternal stream of life—you used to speak to me about. Have you left for the other shore,—far-far away ? It is beyond my comprehension that my *Debalaya* has been emptied of its holy priest !

You know full well, that I cannot be alone. When the pang of separation, as I pass my days of forlorn life stifling me—there comes floating, the dear heavenly voice of yours, from your sweet 'Home' in the care of God, the Bliss supreme, which stirrs up the very core of my being. I feel the soft caring touch of your hand that ever blesseth, upon my head—that puts a thrill in my soul. They say that my fortune has slipped away but just tell me—I must have it from you straight—if this

is true. With your own finger-tip, you did adorn my forehead with the auspicious vermillion mark. Has all stamp of the glory of your life, been wiped off?

Mark Of
Glory
Wipes Not

Mother Divine, Mother of the helpless—Oh the Mystic Divine! Inscrutable are Thy ways! Why shower Thy blessings unlimited on the unworthy and why take them away? When the cup of happiness of life was full to the brim through Your Grace—why all on a sudden withdraw it from my lips?

One has heard of the saints in the Gita and the Upanishads. Was not the Symbol of their ideals, here before our very eyes? A self-less human life dedicated to humanity! Did not we hear from him often—‘When the Mother’s call does come, I shall depart unto Her, with a smiling grateful heart?’ Ah! what a smile it was! What unearthly happiness was around him! Silently, he bore his Cross, with his folded hands up-lifted towards You and intently gazing on Your smiling face. What a heavenly glow on his countenance—shrunk through prolonged illness. What a divine splendour beamed through his painful looks!

Smile &
Depart Unto
Mother

In this dark wilderness, how am I to wander alone, oh my Mother—My ever-glowing Beacon Light! Do please be with me always and also keep him by my side all the time. At the journey’s end, when the goal of my Pilgrimage is reached, just let me drop into your lap, smiling like him. And may I be welcomed there through his smiling face,—so bless me, my dear loving Mother.”

* * * * *

Let us have that faith in us, to feel with Sadhu Pramathalal—“There is no real discontinuity. The aspect only changes,—light fades here only to shine more brightly there. The coil only is burnt to ashes, but soul persists with us in our remembrances to re-create itself in us”.

Light Fades
to Shine
More &
Re-creates
Itself

— Doubt And Faith —

"My soul, if thou indeed lovest thy God, be not afraid to look the world in the face. Mysterious and charmingly wonderful are the ways of Providence. He has appointed a huge, dark spectre that follows one day and night. It is a shadow proceeding out of thine own heart, which from a mere speck,—gradually threatens to cover the whole face of the earth. Its name is Doubt. If in my heart I feel that my God is with me, and I am unspeakably happy,—it comes and says: "Is it not a mere illusion"? If through prayer I feel that my whole being is my Master's,—it laughs and says: "I know thee better." When my soul is lashed unto death and my whole heart is cut up in agony and anguish,—it laughs at my tears. And when I feel a sort of unearthly calm even in the midst of my sins, in the sense of the all-encompassing judgment of Him Who is the Fountain of Mercy,—it reproaches me with self-indulgence. When in the darkness of my soul, and the denser darkness of the world outside me, I can not see my way, and anxiously pray and wait for the Light,—it rebukes me with indolence. And when at last a ray of light breaks forth and I pour out my whole being in an ecstasy of love and hope, and my soul rejoices at the sight of heavenly flowers that spring up around me,—it comes gliding slowly like a bruised serpent with dark insinuations of pride.

Often, often have I sought refuge from the hands of this Tormmentor in the silent bosom of God—with Faith and Hope. Here is this other bosom of God—roaring, rushing, tempestuous, full of the darkest tumults—but still the bosom of the same Father, where thou hast to grapple with this giant spectre, yea, wrestle with it either unto death or unto everlasting life. Seek not to avoid it, flee not from it like a coward.—Death or Victory!

—Benoyendranath : 25th May, 1896.

Mohit Chandra Sen

Mohit Chandra Sen

Mohitchandra was born on 11th December, 1870, in a rich family of Calcutta. Sree Madhab Chandra Sen, the grand-father, was a Dewan of the Bengal Bank' (Later, The Imperial Bank). His father, Sree Jaykrishna Sen, M.A., was a devoted follower of his cousin Brahmananda Keshab Chandra Sen and enthusiastically helped the latter in his educational activities in the Albert Institute and in the secretarial work in the Bharatbarshya Brahma Samaj. Several of its historical reports of the time, were drawn up by him. His,—‘A Brief Exposition of the Principles of Nababidhan’ may be regarded as a standard book for reference. During his later days he, owing to some family difficulties, accepted the professorship in English in the Coochbehar College. To supplement his income, he even wrote ‘Notes on Milton’ and other books which were quite popular among the students.

Family

Mohitchandra was gifted both in mind and spirit and always regarded as a brilliant student of his class. In his B.A. Examination, he obtained First Class Honours in English and Philosophy. In his M.A. Examination he stood second in the First Class in Philosophy.

Brilliant
Student :
His Univers-
ity Career

His first appointment was as professor of Philosophy in the Berhampur College in 1889. And what could be a more congenial atmosphere for him? Cousin Benoyendranath was there as Headmaster and putting up with his brother-in-law, Khetra Mohan Sen. On Mohitchandra's arrival, they started a Bachelor's Mess, between the two. His friend Hiralal Halder, Janaki Bhattachaya, A. H. Wheeler and other great minds were there with the great encyclopaedic pundit Dr. Brajendra Nath Seal, as principal. Every day was a feast for their minds. It was indeed a great thing for a mofussil station to possess such a galaxy of intellectual giants, at one time or other, within a short span of five years.

Professor at
Berhampur
1889
Galaxy of
Intellectual
Giants

Acharya
Brajendra-
nath &
the Halo

Brajendranath had a great liking for Mohitchandra and used to call him the 'Platonic idea'. The attachment between the 'Trios' of the Prayer Meeting and Acharya Brajendranath gradually grew deeper. The pure simple life of Mohitchandra created a deep impression on the Acharya's mind and after Mohitchandra's death, he expressed his loving feeling by his strange admission that he could see a halo over Mohitchandra's head, when he was living, as is painted by famous artists over heads of Saints.

The Child
Philosopher's
Novel Use of
Umbrella

Khetramohon loved to tell us about an interesting episode in the life of Mohitchandra of that time, which just shows what a child Mohitchandra was, by nature. One night, Khetramohon was resting in his Verandah after his meals. The sky was quite clear, the full-moon shining above. He noticed from a distance, some one approaching his house, with an umbrella full open over the head. Khetramohon told his wife (cousin of Benoyendranath), who was sitting by his side—"What a strange sight: Who else could it be but the mad child-philosopher Mohitchandra?" And lo and behold—it was Mohitchandra indeed! His face beaming with smile, he entered the house and without any preamble thrust on Khetramohon his forceful and hence most cordial invitation to a dinner at their house, that very night. "Khetra Babu", shouted out Mohitchandra joyfully, "Benoy has himself cooked 'Khichury' to-night and you must come and share it with us". And with what a peal of ringing laughter, the umbrella was closed, when Khetramohon drew his attention to the fun of the situation,—an umbrella overhead on a clear moonlit night! Khetramohon, with his usual wit remarked,—“Mohit Babu, how can the poor umbrella protect you from the moon-rays, when you are already moonstruck?” As a matter of habit, Mohitchandra came out of his house, umbrella in hand, usual use of which is as a protection against scorching sun or dripping rains. This absent-minded philosopher opened it out over his head, even though it was a clear cool night! A simple child, what would he

know of umbrellas! just reminiscent of the classical Newtonian story of constructing two doors of different sizes to his cage,—one for the mother bird and the other for its young one. Who ever has heard of an invitation for dinner at such an unearthly hour, when dinner and the dinner-time were already over? But no amount of protests from Khetramohon and his good wife would prevail and save the former from Mohitchandra's strong endearing grasp and he was cajoled along to taste the tempting dish.

Dinner at
Ten I

From Berhampur, both Benoyendranath and Mohitchandra joined the Government service in 1891, as professors,—the former at Bhagalpur and the latter, at Dacca. While at Dacca, on Saturdays, after his college hours, many of Mohitchandra's students and friends would gather round him at a special class, to listen to his talks on various interesting subjects,—both literary and philosophical. These were very refreshing for their terse clear expression and graceful style, interspersed with wit and humour,—yet illuminated with the light from a great mind.

Dacca 1891

On one occasion, he read a very thoughtful paper on Carlyle, which was highly appreciated by everybody and subsequently published on the insistence of his friends. Since that date, he used to be addressed by his friends as 'Professor Teufelsdröckh', a famous character in the 'Sartor Resartus', whose 'Philosophy of clothes' was suggested by Goethe's famous lines in the 'Faust',—"I spin and spin and weave the garment of the spirit". The moments are only linked together to give expression to the eternal. Prof. Teufelsdröckh was a teacher of all things, studying Moments in their eternal significance, the eternal spirit clothed in its end-less embodiments in characters, forming one drama of life. In history, the Professor read the characters of all ages and found an infinitude in depth in every soul,—the perennial spring of poetry, of all inspired utterances, writings of all great thinkers and activities of all heroes. What a close similarity with Mohitchandra's idea. Another paper of

Prof. Teufels
dröckh
in the Drama
of Life.

Mohitchandra on—"The Beginnings of Religious Life, read at the Brahmo Mandir (26th Nov. 1892) was also very much appreciated.

From Dacca, Mohitchandra was transferred to the Hooghly College in 1893. It was indeed very welcome for him, as from Hooghly he could easily join his friends in the Saturday sittings of his dear old Prayer Meeting at Calcutta. Benoyendranath had also by this time been transferred to the Calcutta Presidency College. To be of service to the young men, a residential boarding house, 'The Fraternal Home' was started and the Prayer Meeting was revived there with fresh inspiration. About this time, a serious epidemic of Plague broke out in Calcutta and people were fleeing away from the city in a rush. Mohitchandra's Chinsurah house proved a safe shelter for Benoyendranath's family. No conveyance was available and the family was shifted on a country boat, up the Ganges—only Benoyendranath and his next brother Satyendranath, then a medical student, stayed on to nurse the ailing.

With Benoyendranath's family taking care of his Chinsurah establishment, Mohitchandra was more free to be in the midst of his friends in Calcutta, the 'Fraternal Home' being the attractive rendezvous for the Prayer Meeting Band staying on in the city.

We have seen Mohitchandra, the learned Professor of Philosophy with an umbrella spread overhead on a clear full moon night and we also find the Philosopher in a dancing mood of a child. The pleasant pilgrimage of the Prayer Meeting party to Chittagong in 1897, has already been referred to. One day the Pilgrims went to the Chandranath Hill,—an outing for a spiritual feast in kinship with nature. Though not very high, the hill was a steep climb and nobody ever expected that Mohitchandra would dare or even care to brave it,—rather on the bulky side as he was. Finding him undaunted, Dr. Satyendranath tried to dissuade him from the difficult and risky climb and brother-in-law Gnaendramohon could not resist the temptation of cracking by

Hooghly
College
1893 - 78

The Irrespon-
sible Care-
free
Brother-in-
Law

the way, a brother-in-lawish joke with him. "Mohit brother", he said "You must remember that some day I shall have to face your sister at home, just imagine what would be in store for me when I return to Calcutta without you". Lalitmohon, brother-in-law the other way about, gently reminded him that besides thinking of his own sister, Mohitchandra should also have some consideration for other's sister. Khetramohon's smiling witty remark was,—“Mohit, you should have pity on us also. Fancy our miserable plight if we are to carry you on our shoulders, all the way down the hill. It would be a regular torture, particularly after the tiring journey and heavy doses of “Khichuri”.

But all these serious ‘Dont’s’, although put in a jocular way, did not have any deterrent effect on Mohitchandra. And, to the surprise of all, he was the first to reach the top of the hill, with Benoyendranath a close second—when the rest of the party were only half way up. He was vigorously waiving the ‘Naba-bidhan’ flag in his hand and was dancing in ecstasy like a child. Benoyendranath the other philosopher, was standing like a statue, deeply absorbed in himself, two hands clasped tightly over his breast.

Mohitchandra had his best companion in life,—in eternity too, in his sweet charming wife. In 1899 he married Sm. Sushila Debi, the only daughter of Sree Sreekrishna Chatterjee, a celebrated educationist of his time at Bhagalpur and sister of Principal Lalit Mohon Chatterji and Haridas Chatterjee, the retired Commissioner of Excise and Income-Tax. Sushila Debi had all the richness of spirit with sweet poetic gift and her union with Mohitchandra imbued in her a philosophic outlook on life, by which it became easier for her to enter into the depth of her husband's philosophical mind. The union was an ideal one. Their daughters also inherited the poetic genius of their parents, the younger one Uma's poems published in her *Batayan* and *Ghumer-Aage*, showed how her mind freely moved about in the simplest hamlet of the poor and her poetic eyes through

Music in
the Air &
Dance in
Ecstasy

Happy
Union—
Sushila Debi
1899 *1899* f. 16.

her windows, peeped into their domestic lives, full of hard work, sweetened by the laughter of children round about.

Benoyendranath was the Secretary of the Brahma Samaj Committee,—a representative body of the three branches. The Unitarian Churches of England, placed in its charge a yearly scholarship for the study of Theology at the Manchester College, Oxford. Promothalal was the first receipt of the scholarship, in 1896 and S. Bipin Chandra Pal in 1898, was the next scholar. But S. Pal gave up the scholarship after a short time and took up a lecturing campaign there, on the Spiritual life of India and its Religion. When Mohitchandra's name was suggested for the scholarship, S. Pal discouraged the idea and wrote—"The Theological College here has nothing to present to a man of Mohitchandra's mental calibre, philosophical outlook and his devotional up-lift". Mohitchandra withdrew his candidature.

Mohitchandra was very impulsive,—highly sensitive to all questions of self-respect and he could not long continue in the Government service. About this time, the Indian Freedom Movement had just started in Bengal, after its Partition by Lord Curzon. Boycott of British goods and use of Swadesi was the cry everywhere. The clarion call of 'Bande Mataram' was ringing in the air all over Bengal. Mohitchandra joined this movement and was a prominent figure,—both figuratively as well as in the literal significance, in the meetings held in different parts of the city, particularly in the Narendra Nath Sen Square in front of his residence and 'Panthi's ground near his former residence.

Although Mohitchandra did not live to see India free, his spirit must have been working all through its struggle, as much as the spirit of Keshabchandra blessing Gandhiji in his call of 'Quit India', which was the echoing of his similar bold utterances—'Perish British rule, this very moment,' while in England, in 1870 (three quarters of a century before) still reverberating in the air. It has been truly said, "The wind bloweth,—

Manchester
Scholarship
Candidature
Withdrawn

Resigns
Government
Service
1900
1898

Partition of
Bengal-
Days

no one knows from where it cometh and where it goeth". Undoubtedly, the spirit of all ages and climes moved all minds of India, as it did in other countries in all the fights for liberty. The calls of the spirits were to be felt in all the calls,—the call to rise above all forms of bondage and shackles of ages; the call to be free,—as free as the spirit in us all. The spirit of Mohitchandra must have been with us, blessing all the time, in all our sufferings and how happy he must be feeling at our freedom.

Keshab-chandra's & Mohitchandra's Spirits Bless The Freedom Movement

After giving up Government service, Mohitchandra was for a short time with Poet Rabindranath at 'Shantiniketan'—then the 'Brahmacharjasram Vidyalaya'. He was certainly an asset to the institution. But his health did not permit him to continue work there. The attachment between the two great minds was deep.

Pramathalal and Benoyendranath were first introduced to the Poet through Mohitchandra; but it was the elder-brotherly advice of Pramathalal that steadied Mohitchandra in his approach to the Poet. While at Cuttock, Pramathalal received letters from the Poet, Mohitchandra and Sushila Debi, on the same day. In his reply to Mohitchandra, he wrote,—

Logic & Philosophy gains from the Poetry: Reason & Bhakti: Logic and Magic

“...তোমরা বোলপুর গিয়েছিলে। বিনয় গিয়েছিলেন কি? আশা করি সকলে বেশ আনন্দ লাভ করেছিলে। রবীন্দ্রবাবুর সঙ্গে তোমার পরিচয়টা বেশ ভাল রকম হয়, আমার ইচ্ছে। তাঁর প্রতিভা ও চরিত্রের ভেতর যে সব ভক্তিভাবোদ্দীপক গুণ আছে, তোমার সঙ্গে থেকে তার উৎকর্ষ সাধিত হয়, আর তোমার চরিত্রে ভক্তির অভাবে যে সকল ভাল ভাল ভাব নষ্ট হয়ে যাচ্ছে—তা তাঁর সঙ্গে থেকে বেশ জর্তুপুষ্ট হয়—এই আমার প্রার্থনা। তাঁর প্রতিভার ভেতর একটা বিশেষ ভাব আছে, যে ভাবের ভেতর দিয়ে লোকেন পালিত, দেবেন সেনদের সঙ্গে তাঁর কিছু যোগ হতে পারে বটে,—তোমার আমার সঙ্গে তাঁর ঐক্যের ভূমি একটু স্বতন্ত্র। সেই গুলি তোমার আমার মতন লোকদের খুব প্রয়োজন। তুমি সেই সব

ভাবের ভেতর দিয়ে, তাঁর সঙ্গে প্রাণে প্রাণে এক হয়ে, তোমার জীবনের উদ্দেশ্য সাধনে কৃতসংকল্প হও—তিনি এখন তোমার বিশেষ সহায়। তাঁর জীবনের উদ্দেশ্য সাধনে তুমিও তাঁর বিশেষ সহায়। এ কথাটা তিনি যেমন বুঝেছেন, তুমি তেমন বোঝনি। তাই আমার তোমাকে এত কথা লেখা। তিনি লিখেছেন, “আপনাদিগকে বঙ্কুরূপে পাইয়া, নিজেকে লাভবান মনে করি।” আমাদের, কথাটা উল্টে দিতে হবে। অনেক স্বাভাবিক সদগুণ দিয়ে ভগবান তোমাকে পাঠিয়েছেন। গ্রায়-শাস্ত্র পড়ে, নৈয়ায়িকদের বুদ্ধি পেয়ে—সেগুলির মাঝে মাঝে অযত্ন হয়। সেই জন্যই তারা সময় সময় অদৃশ্য হয়। পাছে কেশব সেনের চেয়ে পি. কে. রায়কে বেশী ভালবাস—সেই ছেলেবেলার ভয়, এখনও আছে। এখন একটা বিশেষ সুযোগ এসেছে। রবীন্দ্রবাবুর সঙ্গে এক হয়ে, একটা বিশেষ কাজে লেগে গেলে—তোমার জীবন ফলবান হবে। নতুবা, এমন জীবন বিফলে যাবে। এই চোখ দুটী দিয়েই যেন ২৪টা ফল দেখে যেতে পারি।...”

Jeevan-
Debata :
Innate
Creative
Urge

Pramathalal's heart's desire was fulfilled and he did see this with his eyes. Mohitchandra edited the poetical works of Rabindranath in four volumes of 'Kabya-Grantha'. Mohitchandra's long Preface to this,—a poetry in prose, was a piece of literature by itself. It was an expression of the depth of the mind with great philosophical outlook and keen spiritual in-sight. Feelings of *Prem* and *Bhakti* prevailed over pure literary and metaphysical thought. The preface was translated into English for the benefit of the English readers. His exposition of the Poet's *Jeevan-Devata* was striking,—an echo of the Poet's heart. Veiled in mystery, the *Jeevan-Debata*, has an all-pervading intimate touch unconsciously guiding all life movements for the fulfilment of innate creative urges. This was probably the first complete collection of Rabindranath's poetical pieces, classified in a distinctive and original way. It was once proposed that

his wife, Sm. Sushila Debi would take charge of the 'Sishu Sadan' there. With her loving nature and poetic temperament, she would certainly have been the fittest person for the responsibility.

Mohitchandra's relation with the Poet was always very dear. The intimacy between the two was not a boyhood friendship but the long period of time is not a vital factor in the determination of its intensity or a measure of sweetness. The two would pine to be together whenever possible and Mohitchandra, even when in the midst of busy pre-occupations would snatch away some time and rush down to Rabindranath at Shantiniketan, just to have the Poet's charming company, even though for a short time. He once even followed the Poet to far-away Almora, where the Poet was staying with his ailing daughter.

Sweet Com-
panionship :
Music of
Eternal
Childhood

While in Calcutta, the Poet also would come to Mohitchandra's residence at Heramba Das's Lane and pass enjoyable evenings together,—the Poet now reciting some of his favourite poems, now singing his new songs and the intervals taken up by exchange of the music of the two souls of eternal childhood.*

On one occasion, Mohitchandra slipped away from Calcutta to Bolpur. He stealthily approached the Poet in silence and drawing him a little aside, pushed into his folded palms some papers, and said—'Rabi Babu, I find I cannot help you here now with my service, but I have kept my earnings through University examiner-ship, earmarked for the Ashram. Kindly bless me by accepting it. It will give me some peace of mind for the time being.' The shy Mohitchandra then fled away from

* The story goes that the child-heart of the Poet wanted once to have a childish fun with his child-like friend and quite forgot his age or position of life. To spring a pleasant surprise on Mohitchandra, the Poet did not take his carriage to the front door through the Mechuabazar Street, but kept it waiting at the Bechu Chatterjee Street and entered Heramba Das Lane through the far end, which was barely a slum path. The Poet made his sudden appearance, as if dropping from the sky. And what a peal of laughter filled the air when the two child-spirits met.

The Rare &
Invaluable
Thousand :
Friend Files

the scene. The Poet found that the paper was a thousand rupees currency-note. This simple child-like act produced a deep lasting stirring in the Poet's heart and he feelingly referred to this in his 'In Memoriam' on Mohitchandra's death ("ঐ হাজার টাকার মতন দুর্লভ ও দুর্লভ হাজার টাকা, ইতিপূর্বে ও ইহার পরে, আমার হাতে আর আসে নাই"). The *Ashram* was just at that time facing some financial difficulties and the help was very timely and a blessing of God.

The Good
Samaritan
Blushes.

On another occasion, Mohitchandra in the same way, placed a bundle of currency-notes for thousand rupees in the hands of Revered Kanti Chandra Mitra (our dear universal *Kakababu*), the missionary in-charge of the 'Nababidhan Prachar Ashram' at Pataldanga, when he came to know that the establishment had run into debts. Here also he wanted to play the good Samaritan behind the public gaze and blushed profusely, on any attempt at thanks-giving or blessing. Such was the child-philosopher Mohitchandra and the above are just two instances of his simple and loving nature.

Brahmabandhab
Upadhyaya :
Friend Till
Last.

Brahmabandhab Upadhyay was at one time drawn very close to Nababidhan*, through his intimacy with the 'Trio' and their elders, Hirananda and Nandalal. Later on, he drifted away entirely to politics ; but even then, his relations with Mohitchandra continued till his 'Dawn Society', 'Twentieth Century' or even the famous revolutionary paper 'Sandhya' days. The fire-brand Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, with his indomitable courage and zeal, wished to create a chair on 'Hindu Philosophy' at the Cambridge or the Oxford Universities.

* It is not known to many, that of Keshabchandra's 'Band of Hope', Rishi Pratapchandra was the President and Rev. Kali Charan Banerjee, Mr. A. M. Bose, Pandit Sibanath Shastri and Krishna Behari Sen were four of the Vice Presidents. Gnanendra Nath Banerjee, Lalita Mohan Roy, Prya Nath Mallik, Khetra Mohan Sen and Nanda, Lal Sen were amongst the members of the Managing Committee. And Bhabani Charan Banerjee (Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya) was the Secretary. The 'Trio' and the Prayen Meeting Band were enthusiastic members.

Pramathalal heartily approved of the idea and started with enthusiasm to give a definite shape to the ambitious scheme and even some funds were promised. About the personnel for the chair, Dr. Brajendranath was the first choice, but he was not available. Benoyendranath was not in a position to be away from India for any length of time. So also there was some difficulty about Mohitchandra. Pramathalal suggested the name of Principal T. L. Vaswani but Brahmabandhab was insistent on having Mohitchandra. The scheme however ultimately fell through.

After long twenty-five years, Pramathalal's and Brahmabandhab's fine dream came true. Three great philosophical minds of India were honoured by the Oxford University,—firstly the Poet Dr. Rabindranath and then Dr. Radhakrishnan and Dr. Surendra Nath Das Gupta. The Poet had his first recognition in the west as a philosopher, although he was the poet-philosopher of India since long,—was even the President of the Philosophical Congress. In May 1930 the Poet delivered the memorable Hibbert series of lectures. This was a revelation to his audience and had a universal appeal.

The Oxford
Chair for
Indian
Philosophy

Rajah Ram Mohon Roy—the Universal Man, was the Poet's 'Hero' and in his lectures the Poet with his abiding faith in Man, preached his 'Religion of Man'. The lectures were delivered in the Manchester College, Oxford—the same dear institution of Pramathalal's Theological studies from 1896 to 1899. And, there at the same hall in 1902 the Catholic Vedantic Sanyasi Brahmabandhab delivered his series of four lectures—On Thoughts, Ethios, Sociology and Theistic Principles of the Hindus and Benoyendranath also delivered a few, in 1905. In the Poet's case however it was not the Philosophy of the East that was expounded before the West, but the Universal Man delivered his message to the Universe of Men,—humanity. Oxford, where a chair was proposed to be established for Mohitchandra in 1904, after a quarter of a century greeted the greatest Poet Philosopher of the age, to adorn its famous Chair. How

Mohitchandra's
Mission &
Pramathalal's Dream
Realised
Through
The Poet

glad must have Pramathalal and Brahmabandhab felt at this, one in the last month of his Journey's end (death 30th June 1930) and the other in the lap of eternity already (death in 1907). Mohitchandra must have been also feeling happy that the mission left unfulfilled by him owing to family difficulties, was at long last so gloriously fulfilled by his Poet. ¹⁹⁰⁴

After leaving Santiniketan, Mohitchandra joined first the General Assembly Institute (now the Scottish Churches' College) and then the Ripon College (now the Surendra Nath Banerjee College).*

Elements of
Moral Philo-
sophy

Mohitchandra's philosophical mind contributed to the philosophical world a fine treatise on Ethics,—‘The Elements of Moral Philosophy,’ for the University Students. It was published by Messrs. John Murray of London and printed by Oliver Boyd, Edinburgh. It can well stand comparison with the works in the same line by Dr. T. H. Greene and other distinguished world-renowned professors. The book received high appreciation both in his own country and abroad. In India, principals P. K. Roy, Brajendra Nath Seal, H. R. James, Rev. J. P. Haythwaite and in foreign lands Dr. A. Campbell Traser, Dr. J. Hutcheson Stirling, Prof. D. G. Rotohie, Prof. J. Seth of Edinburgh, Prof. Charlestor Upton of Oxford, Prof. J. Muirhead of Birmingham and others—all highly eulogised the luminous exposition of the Ethics of various intricacy. In the preface to the first edition, Mohitchandra indicated that his writing was from a realistic point of view and expressed his gratitude to Dr. Martin, Prof. Seth, Prof. Muirhead and

Highly
Appreciated :
At Home &
Abroad

* He delivered quite a number of learned public lectures in his life. One of these—‘Miracle of Faith’ was particularly liked by Pramathalal. He sent a copy of this to Miss. Welde (Tennyson's niece) at Oxford and she wrote back—

“I have read with the most intense interest, the address by Mohit Chandra Sen. It is simply splendid! India is indeed the land of noble thoughts and you and your family (Trilo?) are amongst the chief thinkers to show us how much we of the West have yet to learn from you of the East.” Mohitchandra's lecture on the occasion of the Utsab of the Prayer Meeting in 1900, was also a memorable one.

other famous writers on Ethics. In the second revised edition, he wanted to impress two facts of great importance,—“firstly, that Morality is an End ~~by itself~~; and secondly—that both Virtue and Happiness are constituent parts of the End”. It long continued to be a popular text-book in the Calcutta University and also abroad.

Mohitchandra had in view to render into English Verse all the Upanishads and also to write up two complete series of books on ‘Indian Systems of Thought’ and ‘Evolution of the Indian Mind’, in the light of the New Dispensation, as revealed through their Prayer Meeting Pilgrimages. He was only 36 when he was called to his rest and his wish could not be fulfilled. He could complete the translation of only two of the series of Upanishads. His ‘Manduka Upanishad’ received high appreciation from many. The most striking one being that conveyed in a letter to Pramathalal from Dr. Malbari of Bombay. The great Pundit Upadhaya Gour Gobinda Roy was charmed with its new interpretation and said that although a free translation in a condensed form, the book expresses beautifully the Upanishad’s *Sadhana*,—the devotional life of the Rishis in its different stages.

The soul in the Upanishad may be regarded to be covered in five Folds or Sheathes or *Koshas*, viz., (1) Physical or *Annamaya*, dealing with the materialistic world around us. (2) Biological or *Pranamaya*—pertaining to life and its movements. (3) Sensorial or *Chinmaya* where the faculties draw ideas—both deductive and inductive from the sense experience. (4) The True and Real or *Hiranmaya*—understanding and assimilation of ideas both innate and intuitive, in their eternal significance. (5) The Blissful or *Anandamaya Para*—where the soul lives, moves and grows in perfect beautiful life—full of joy. In the Upanishad it is also suggested that these sheaths represent also the different stages of the soul in its ascent to the highest, in five conditions,—(i) The waking or *Jagrata*, (ii) The Dreaming or *Swapna*, (iii) The Forgetting or *Sushupta*, (iv) Lost or *Turya*—lost in the Soul of souls and finally (v) the eternal ‘OM’

Upanishads
in English
Verse

The Soul in
Upanishad

The Ascetic
House-
holder :
Spirit of
Sacrifice

Mohitchandra was ordained as 'Ascetic Householder' or *Grihastha Pracharak* of Nababidhan, by Upadhaya Gourgobinda. He prayed and covenanted for strength to surrender his earnings unconditionally to his *Mandali*, sacrificing his own wishes and in the midst of worldly life, fulfilling the vow of poverty. He proposed to dedicate himself afterwards, completely to the service of his *Mandali*, but his life was cut short on 9th June 1906, before it could come out in full bloom. He was the youngest of the 'Trio' of the Prayer Meeting Pilgrims who were considered as 'Inseparable' and whose names would always come to the lips together and he was the first to pass behind the veil, into the Great Beyond. The break-up in the Trio in this world, apart from being a terrible shock to his near and dear ones was an irreparable loss to the *Mandali*, which expected so much from such a gifted and self-less personality. The loss of his valuable life—and that too following a very simple operation, was a bolt from the blue and the grief can only be borne with that faith in the Dispensation of Providence, which Mohitchandra had always displayed in his life.

Last to
Come :
First to
Go

His Soul of
Music flies to
Land of
perpetual
Music

Mohitchandra was born with a soul of music, was steeped in music of his philosophy, poetry and in fact of everything in his life. He passed away with full notes of music in the soul, as it is in the Soul of all souls. Always above all worldly pettiness, unperturbed by the trials and tribulations of life, he always accepted with the same grace, both pleasure and sorrow as they came from the hands of the ever blissful Divine Mother (মঙ্গলময়ী জননী). The pure white swan while singing with a glad heart, flapped its wings of Prayer in the current of Divine Grace and entered infinity,—the land of perpetual light and music and bliss of childhood.

(1)

* * * * *

(2)

His name is Heart of heart,—He loves the heart
And in it works—a near and mighty Help
In trouble. He resplendent shines and all breathes.
So, then, do thou fix thy mind on Him
The always true and changeless,—worthiest end.
God, the Bliss eternal, is the mark ; ‘Om’,—
the Everlasting Yea
Is that strong bow ; and thy soul,—the arrow.

O, strive thou Him to know, Who shows Himself.
Behold the Universal irradiating Light
Whose glory is on earth, and no less on His Home.

* * * * *

(3)

Oh! the Spirit to the spirit calls, life leaps up.
Him with unclouded intellect, the wise
Perceive as Joy, as joy's own form of joy—
Unbodied, eternal, He is all in all.
Snap the heart's knotted fibres, vanish doubts,
And action's selfish bonds must disappear.
And now in undivided glory dwells
In the heart's golden core, the stainless One,
Whose all white lustre is the light of lights.
Lo, He is before, behind, above, beneath,
On right and left,—the undivided Bliss!

* * * * *

(4)

Lo, on the self-same tree two gracious birds.
What friendship keep! what constant union!
See, one of them looks on approvingly
—The while the other a sweet fruit doth eat.
(The one eats not, he is content to see
For very joy in love's sufficiency!)
So sweet a bond subsists, to be sure, where God
And man's soul within the self-same body dwell.
His seat, who in Himself has found the source
Of joy, Himself his playmate, to Himself
Is, like a lover, true, and ever leads

* * * * *

He's invisible,—still seek while in the body ;
With soul of every creature, He overspreads,
And rises when the soul is purified !
The self-knower knows the perfect Self, in whom
The all, as in its lover's arms, doth rest—
And they who Him revere, in time, attain
Surcease of sorrow and desire ; and death.

* * * * *

Study deep, memories' grasp—ought little avail ;
Stores of maxims, gifts of talent—can never hope
To find Him. He finds, whom the Self doth choose.
Perceives the glory that is His alone.
Perceives the light that only He can show.
And not by weakness can this Self be won :
Or by careless, or who give not up their all too
fond desires.

* * * * *

Who can e'er find Him—but the wise, who in
The world's too sad perturbed ebb and flow

Are firm. They alone enter the home of Brahma.
Only thus the Seers satisfied ! Lulled the passions
The self of each is realised, peace won ;
With souls in oneness lost, they enter the Bliss.
The universal Presence at every place, appears
Before their cloud-less gaze. And when they die,
They gain the crown of death-less liberty.
What of the body ? its elemental parts and sense
To its presiding genius departs :
But the soul, no more on Time's stream of
 cause and consequence,
Is made one with the Spirit,—change-less
 supreme !

* * * * *

(8)

As flowing rivers when they meet the sea
Lose names and forms, whate'er distinguishes,
Lost in the vast abyss, even so the sage
Loses name, form, whate'er was his own self.
Behold, in blessed ecstasy he stands
Outside of sorrow, outside sin, and freed
From passion's every bond,—immoral so!



(The Original Slokas, having bearing on the Extracts
from Mohitchandra's Manduk-Opanishad)

(১)

তদেতৎ সত্যম্—

যথা সূদীপ্তাং পাবকান্ধিস্কলিঙ্গাঃ

সহস্রশঃ প্রভবন্তে সরূপাঃ ।

তথাক্ষরাং বিবিধাঃ সোম্য ভাবাঃ

প্রজায়ন্তে তত্র চৈবাপি যন্তি ॥ ১ ॥

দিব্যো হুমূৰ্ত্তঃ পুরুষঃ স বাহ্যভ্যন্তরো হুজঃ ।

অপ্রাণো হুমনাঃ শুভ্রো হুক্ষরাং পরতঃ পরঃ ॥ ২ ॥

এতস্মাজ্জায়তে প্রাণো মনঃ সর্বৈল্লিয়াণি চ ।

ঋং বায়ুর্জ্যোতিরাপঃ পৃথিবী বিশ্বস্ত ধারিণী ॥ ৩ ॥

তস্মাদগ্নিঃ সমিধো যন্ত সূর্যঃ

সোমাং পর্জন্ত ওষধয়ঃ পৃথিব্যাম্ ॥ ৫ ॥

অতঃ সমুদ্রা গিরয়শ্চ সর্বৈহস্মাং

শ্রুদন্তে দিগ্ধবঃ সর্বরূপাঃ ।

অতশ্চ সৰ্বা ওষধয়ো রসশ্চ

যেনৈষ ভূতৈস্তিষ্ঠতে হস্তরাষ্ট্রা ॥ ৯ ॥

—২।১।১,২,৩,৫,৯

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(২)

আবিঃ সন্নিহিতং শুভাচরয়াম

মহৎ পদমত্রৈতৎ সমর্পিতম ।

এজং প্রাণম্নিমিষচ্চ যদেতজ্জানথ সনসব্বরেণ্যং

পরং বিজ্ঞানাদ্ বদ্যিষ্ঠং প্রজানাম ॥ ১ ॥

যদচ্চিমদ্ যদগুভ্যোহণু চ

যস্মিন্ লোকা নিহিতা লোকিনশ্চ ।

তদেতদক্ষরং ব্রহ্ম স প্রাণন্তু বাঙ্মনঃ

তদেতৎ সত্যং তদমৃতং তদেদ্রব্যং সোম্য বিদ্ধি ॥ ২ ॥

ধনুর্গৃহীত্বোপনিষদং মহাস্ত্রং

শরং হ্যাপাসা নিশিতং সক্ষয়ীত ।

আয়ম্য তত্তাবগতেন চেতসা

লক্ষ্যং তদেবাক্ষরং সোম্য বিদ্ধি ॥ ৩ ॥

প্রাণবো ধনুঃ শরো হ্যাত্মা ব্রহ্ম তল্লক্ষ্যমুচ্যতে ।

অগ্রমন্তেন বেদ্রব্যং শরবত্তন্ময়ো ভবেৎ ॥ ৪ ॥

যস্মিন্ ত্বোঃ পৃথিবী চাস্তরীক্ষম্

ওতং মনঃ সহ প্রাণৈশ্চ সর্কৈঃ ।

তমেবৈকং জানথ আস্থানম্

অন্না বাচো বিমুক্তধামৃতশ্চৈষ সেতুঃ ॥ ৫ ॥

যঃ সর্কজঃ সর্কবিদ্ যশ্চৈষ মহিমা ভুবি

দিব্যে ব্রহ্মপুরে হ্যেব ব্যোম্যাত্মা প্রতিষ্ঠিতঃ ॥ ৬ ॥

—২।২।১,২,৩,৪,৫,৬

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(৩)

ভিত্তিতে হৃদয়গ্রন্থিচ্ছিত্তস্তে সর্কসংশয়াঃ ।

ক্ষীয়ন্তে চাস্ত কৰ্ম্মাণি তস্মিন্ দৃষ্টে পরাবরে ॥ ৮ ॥

হিরণ্যে পরে কোষে বিরজং ব্রহ্ম নিষ্কলম্ ।

তচ্ছব্রং জ্যোতিষাং জ্যোতিস্তদ্ যদাত্মবিদো বিদুঃ ॥ ৯ ॥

ন তত্র স্বর্ঘ্যো ভাতি ন চন্দ্রতরুকং

নেমা বিদ্যাতো ভাস্তি কুতোহয়মগ্নিঃ ।

তমেব ভাস্তমহুভাতি সর্কঃ

তস্ত ভাসা সর্কমিদং বিভাতি ॥ ১০ ॥

ত্রৈবেদমমৃতং পুরস্তাদ-ব্রহ্ম পশ্চাদ্ ব্রহ্ম দক্ষিণতশ্চোত্তরেণ ।

অধশ্চোৰ্দ্ধাঃ প্রস্থতং ত্রৈবেদং বিশ্বমিদং বরিষ্ঠম্ ॥ ১১ ॥

—২।২।৮,৯,১০,১১

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(৪)

দ্বা স্পৰ্শা সযুজা সখায়া সমানং বৃক্ষং পরিষস্বজাতে ।

তয়োরন্থঃ পিপ্ললং স্বাদন্ত্যনগ্নন্নতোহভিচাক্ষীতি ॥ ১ ॥*

সমানে বৃক্ষে পুরুষো নিমগ্নো-

হনীশয়া শোচতি মুহমানঃ ।

জুষ্টং যদা পশুতান্নমৌশ-

মস্ত মহিমানমিতি বীতশোকঃ ॥ ২ ॥

প্রাণো হ্যেষ যঃ সৰ্বভূতৈৰ্বিভাতি

বিজানন্ বিদ্বান্ ভবতে নাতিবাদী ।

আত্মক্ৰীড় আত্মরতিঃ ক্রিয়াবা-

নেষ ব্রহ্মবিদ্যাং বরিষ্ঠঃ ॥ ৪ ॥

—৩।১।১,২,৪

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(৫)

সত্যেন লভ্যস্তপসা হ্যেষ আত্মা

সম্যগ্ জ্ঞানেন ব্রহ্মচর্য্যেণ নিত্যম্ ।

অন্তঃশরীরে জ্যোতির্শ্চয়ো হি শুভ্রো

যং পশুন্তি যতয়ঃ ক্ষীণদোষাঃ ॥ ৫ ॥

সত্যমেব জয়তে নানৃতং

ন চক্ষুষা গৃহ্যতে নাপি বাচ্য

নাঈন্দ্রৈর্দেবৈস্তপসা কৰ্ম্মণা বা ।

জ্ঞানপ্রসাদেন বিমুক্তসঙ্ক-

ন্ততস্ত তং পশ্যতে নিকলং ধ্যায়মানঃ ॥ ৮ ॥

—৩।১।৫,৬,৮

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(৬)

নায়মাত্মা প্রবচনেন লভ্যো

ন মেধয়া ন বহুনা শ্রুতেন ।

যমেবৈষ বৃণুতে তেন লভ্য-

ন্তশ্চৈষ আত্মা বৃণুতে তনুং স্বাম্ ॥ ৩ ॥

নায়মাত্মা বলহীনেন লভ্যো

ন চ প্রমাদান্তপসো বাপ্যলিঙ্গাৎ ॥ ৪ ॥

—৩।২।৩,৪

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(৭)

এতৈরুপায়ৈর্ধ্বজতে যন্ত বিদ্বাঃ-

ন্তশ্চৈষ আত্মা বিশতে ব্রহ্মধাম ॥ ৪

সম্প্রাপ্তৈপ্যনমুযয়ো জ্ঞানতৃপ্তাঃ

কৃতাত্মানো বীতরাগাঃ প্রশান্তাঃ ।

তে সর্বগং সর্বতঃ প্রাপ্য ধীরা

যুক্তাত্মানঃ সর্বমেবাবিশন্তি ॥ ৫ ॥

গতাঃ কলাঃ পঞ্চদশ প্রতিষ্ঠা

দেবশ্চ সর্বে প্রতিদেবতাহ ।

কর্মাণি বিজ্ঞানময়শ্চ আত্মা

পরেহব্যয়ে সর্ব একীভবন্তি ॥ ৭ ॥

—৩।২।৪,৫,৭

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(୮)

ସର୍ଥା ନତ୍ତଃ ଅନୁମାନାଃ ସମୁଦ୍ରେ-

ହସ୍ତଃ ଗଚ୍ଛନ୍ତି ନାମରୂପେ ବିହାୟ ।

ତଥା ବିଦ୍ବାନ୍ନାମରୂପାଦ୍ବିମୁକ୍ତଃ

ପରାଂପରଂ ପୁରୁଷମୁପୈତି ଦିବ୍ୟମ୍ ॥ ୮ ॥

ତରତି ଶୋକଂ ତରତି ପାପାନଂ

ଞ୍ଜାଘ୍ରସ୍ଥିତ୍ୟା ବିମୁକ୍ତୋଽୟତ୍ତେ ଭବତି ॥ ୯ ॥

— ୩୨, ୮, ୯

APPENDIX—B

মোহিতচন্দ্র সেন

(ধর্মতত্ত্ব : ১লা আষাঢ়, শনিবার; সংবৎ—১৯৬৩, শক—১৮২৮)

সাধক মোহিতচন্দ্র সেন দেহে নাই; অশরীরী চিন্ময় আত্মা হইয়া, ৩৭ বৎসর বয়সে আধ্যাত্ম-জগতে প্রবিষ্ট হইলেন,—এ সংবাদ শ্রবণে সকলেই ব্যথিত-হৃদয় হইবেন। গত ১৫ই মাঘ, সাধকব্রত গ্রহণ কালে তিনি প্রার্থনার মধ্যে বলিয়াছিলেন,—“ডেকে লও দয়া করে আমাদের ভিতরে, কতদিন আর পরের মত থাকব বাহিরে।” আর আজ এই ২৬শে জ্যৈষ্ঠ, শনিবার, সত্য সত্যই বাহির হইতে ভিতরে প্রবেশ করিলেন। এত সত্ত্বর প্রার্থনা কেন পূর্ণ হইল? সাধক হইয়া দীর্ঘকাল সাধন করিতে না করিতেই কেন তিনি স্বধামে আহুত হইলেন? তিনি কি জন্মসাধক ছিলেন যে তাঁহার প্রার্থনা বাক্য অব্যর্থ ছিল! শিশুর সরল প্রার্থনা অব্যর্থই বটে। মোহিতচন্দ্র যে পণ্ডিত-শিশু ছিলেন। তিনি যে অসারল্য, কাপট্য কি জানিতেন না। “বুধো বালকবৎ ক্রীড়েৎ,”—ইহা তাঁহার পক্ষে বিধি ছিল না—স্বভাব ছিল।

সাধকব্রত গ্রহণের পূর্বে তিনি এই বলিয়া ভীত হইয়াছিলেন যে, তাঁহার মধ্যে এমন সমুদয় ভাব আছে, যাঁহা মণ্ডলীর অপ্রিয় হইতে পারে। তাহা সত্ত্বেও তিনি কি প্রকারে সাধকশ্রেণী ভুক্ত হইবেন? অভয়দাতা তাঁহাকে অভয় দিলেন; তিনি সকল ভয় অতিক্রম করিয়া সাধক ব্রত গ্রহণের জন্ম বেদীর সম্মুখীন হইলেন। সেই সময় তাঁহার প্রার্থনা সত্যই হৃদয়গ্রাহী—

“হে পিতা, যখন বুঝতে পারি যে তোমার বিধান অবতীর্ণ হয়েছে, যখন জানতে পারি যে আমার মত অধম পাপীকেও তুমি ডাকছ,—তোমার সেই আশ্বান শুনে হৃদয়ের ভিতর যে ভাব হয়, তা অন্তর্ধামী, তুমি ছাড়া আর কে গ্রহণ করবে? হে পিতা, আজ

আমি তোমার সেই আহ্বান শুনতে পাচ্ছি। হে বিশ্বপতি, তোমার মণ্ডলী তো ছোট নয়, কোন সঙ্কীর্ণ স্থানে আবদ্ধ নয়। হিন্দু, মুসলমান, খৃষ্টান, বৌদ্ধ—সকলেই যে তোমার মণ্ডলীর অন্তর্ভুক্ত। আর সেই উদার ব্রাহ্ম পরিবার, যা এই সহরে এবং ভারতবর্ষের নানা স্থানে বিস্তৃত, যার প্রত্যেক সভ্য সুখে-দুঃখে, উৎসাহে, নিরুৎসাহে তোমার ধর্মজীবন পালন করবার জন্ত সচেষ্ট আছেন,— তাঁরা সকলেই তোমার আশ্রিত। হে দয়াময়, এই মণ্ডলীর সেবা করে জীবনকে যেন ধন্য করতে পারি।”

তাঁহার হৃদয় সকলকে এক মণ্ডলীভুক্ত দেখিত, কাহাকেও পর ভাবিত না,—এজন্ত তিনি মণ্ডলীকে সঙ্কুচিত সীমার মধ্যে বদ্ধ দেখিলে ব্যথিত-হৃদয় হইতেন।

প্রার্থনার পর তিনি চারিমাস কাল মাত্র দেহে বিত্তমাম ছিলেন। এই চারিমাস এক উদার মণ্ডলীর প্রতিষ্ঠার জন্ত তিনি কি প্রকার পরিশ্রম করিয়াছেন, সকলেই তাহা বিদিত আছেন। তাঁহার প্রাণের চির-সাধ কার্যে পরিণত করিতে কেনই বা তাঁহার প্রাণগত যত্ন হইবে না? তিনি আরও প্রার্থনা করিয়াছেন,—

“হে পুণ্যময়, হে পতিতপাবন, কতদিন থেকে সাধ আছে তোমার সেই মণ্ডলীর ভিতর একান্তে একটা স্থান পাব—যেখানে বিশ্বাসী বিশ্বাসের কথা বলছেন, ভক্ত ভক্তিরসে আপ্লুত হচ্ছেন, অকপট প্রেমে বিশ্বাসীকে আলিঙ্গন করছেন, কর্মী সংকল্পের উচ্ছ্বাসে আপনাকে উৎসর্গ করছেন। সেই মণ্ডলীকে চোখের সামনে দেখতে বড় সাধ হয়।”

তাঁহার যে সাধ ছিল, সে সাধ অচিরে পূর্ণ করিবার জন্তই যেন ভগবান তাঁহাকে অদৃশ্য মণ্ডলীর অঙ্গীভূত করিয়া লইলেন। এই ‘সাধ’ রূপেই তিনি এক্ষণে মণ্ডলী মধ্যে প্রবিষ্ট হইয়াছেন, এবং যেখানেই এই সাধ, সেখানেই তিনি—এ কথা বলিতে আর কুণ্ঠিত হইবার কোনও কারণ নাই।

তিনি অসাধারণ পণ্ডিত ছিলেন, কিন্তু এই পাণ্ডিত্য তাঁহার শিশু-ভাব দ্বারা এমনই প্রচ্ছন্ন ছিল যে, তন্মধ্যে গর্ব বা অভিমানের লেশমাত্র ছিল না। যে ব্যক্তির রচিত “নীতি-বিজ্ঞান”, পাশ্চাত্য বড় বড় পণ্ডিত রচিত “নীতি-বিজ্ঞানের” সমকক্ষ বলিয়া পরিগণিত হইয়া নানা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের পাঠ্যগ্রন্থ মধ্যে নিবিষ্ট হইল, সে ব্যক্তিতে তজ্জন্ম আত্মগরিমা প্রবেশ করিল না,—ইহা কিছু সামান্য কথা নহে। পাঠ্যবস্থায় যিনি অতি সহজেই বহু কঠিন গ্রন্থ আয়ত্ত করিয়া ফেলিতেন, অধ্যাপনা কালে যিনি নীতি-বিজ্ঞান, দর্শন ও গ্রায়-শাস্ত্র জলের মত ছাত্রদিগকে বুঝাইয়া দিতেন, সাহিত্য মধ্যে কোন্ সাহিত্য বিজ্ঞান-সঙ্গত, ইহা যিনি পরিস্কার বাক্যে তাহাদিগকে দেখাইয়া দিতেন, যাহার প্রাঞ্জল ভাষায় অতি জটিল বিষয়ও দর্পনের মত প্রতিভাত হইত,—তাঁহার পাণ্ডিত্যের গভীরতা আমরা সহজে হৃদয়ঙ্গম করিতে পারি। বয়স্কা মহিলা বিদ্যালয়ে স্বল্পশিক্ষিতা মহিলাগণের নিকটে তিনি মনোবিজ্ঞান, নীতিবিজ্ঞান প্রভৃতি দুরূহ বিষয়ও ঈদৃশ মাধুর্যের সহিত বলিতেন যে, আজও মহিলাগণ তাহা বিস্মৃত হইতে পারেন নাই।

তিনি বাল্যকাল হইতে বিশুদ্ধ চরিত্র। অধ্যয়ন কালে সহপাঠিগণের দূষিত সংস্রব হইতে কেবল যে আপনাকে দূরে রাখিতেন তাহা নহে,—তাহাদেরও সংপথে চালনা করিতে আপ্রাণ চেষ্টা করিতেন। এমন কি,—একজন পাশ্চাত্য অধ্যাপকের কুরুচির প্রতিবাদ পর্য্যন্ত করিয়া তিনি তাঁহাকে নিরস্ত করিয়াছিলেন। কেবল দর্শন, গ্রায়াদিরই প্রাঞ্জল ব্যাখ্যা করিতেন তাহা নহে, আধ্যাত্মতত্ত্ব বিষয়েও গভীর দৃষ্টি ছিল। কোন একটা জটিল আধ্যাত্মতত্ত্ব তাঁহার নিকট উপস্থিত করিলে, তিনি উহার এমনই সরল ব্যাখ্যা করিতেন যে সকলেই অবাক হইত। প্রথর অন্তর্দৃষ্টির দ্বারা উহার ভিত্তর প্রবেশ করিতে না পারিলে, সেরূপ কখনই করা যায় না।

স্বদেশের প্রতি তাঁহার অনুরাগ গাঢ় ছিল, এবং সেই অনুরাগের

কলেই মাতৃভাষার প্রতি অনুরক্ত হইয়া ছিলেন, এবং তাঁহার ভাষা সরস ও সহজাকার ধারণ করিয়াছিল। স্বদেশের প্রতি অনুরাগ বৃদ্ধির সহিত, উপনিষৎ প্রভৃতি প্রাচীন শাস্ত্রের প্রতি তাঁহার যে প্রগাঢ় অভিনিবেশ উপস্থিত হইয়াছিল, মণ্ডুকোপনিষদের ইংরাজী পণ্ডিতে অনুবাদ,—তাঁহার একটি বিশিষ্ট প্রমাণ।

ইদানীন্তন মণ্ডলীর হিত-সাধনের জন্ত তিনি অক্লান্ত পরিশ্রম করিয়াছেন। আজি দুই বৎসর পূর্বে যে মারাত্মক উর্দগ অশোগ রক্তপিত্ত রোগে আক্রান্ত হইয়াছিলেন, যে রোগ হইতে রক্ষা পাইবার সম্ভাবনা ছিল না,—সেই রোগের প্রশমনের পরই তিনি কি প্রকারে ঈদৃশ পরিশ্রম করিতেন, আমরা ভাবিয়া অবাক হইতাম। কিন্তু সে রোগ তাঁহাকে বড় দুর্বল করিয়া ফেলিয়াছিল। এত পরিশ্রম তিনি কেবল মনের উৎসাহ বলেই করিতেন। সেই কারণেই চিকিৎসকের লঘুশস্ত্রপাতে তাঁহাকে পাঁচ ছয় দিনের মধ্যে চিকিৎসার অতীত করিল।

তাঁহার আত্মা দেহবন্ধন বিমুক্ত হইল; কিন্তু যে বন্ধনে ভগবান তাঁহাকে মণ্ডলীর সঙ্গে, বন্ধুগণের সঙ্গে, পরিজনবর্গের সঙ্গে বান্ধিয়াছেন,—সে বন্ধন এতদ্বারা দৃঢ়তর হইল। এই বন্ধনের জন্তই আমরা তাঁহাকে হারাইয়াও হারাই নাই। ঈদৃশ পতি-রত্ন হারাইয়া তাঁহার পত্নী শোকাকুলা; আমাদের এই সাস্তুনা তাঁহার সাস্তুনা হউক। তাঁহার দুইটি কন্যা অতি শিশু,—মাতা এখন তাহাদের সহায়। শাস্তিচিন্তে মাতা তাহাদিগকে তাহাদের পিতার অনুরূপ ভাবে গঠন করিয়া তুলিবেন,—এ ভার তাঁহারই উপর গুস্ত হইল। অদৃশ্য মণ্ডলীতে প্রবিষ্ট অমর আত্মা সেখানে অমৃত সন্তোগ করুন এবং ভগবান তাঁহাদের সঙ্গে তাঁহাকে প্রেমবন্ধনে বান্ধিয়াছেন, তাঁহাদের কল্যাণ কামনা তাঁহার হৃদয়ে নিত্য জাগরুক থাকুক,—ইহলোক, পরলোক শান্তি-স্থলে পূর্ণ হউক ॥

—স্মৃতি-তীর্থ—

কেশবচন্দ্রের নব-জীবনগ্রন্থ প্রার্থনার প্রেরণা, পরবর্তীকালে তিনটি যুবকের অনন্ত যাত্রী-পথ আলোকিত করিল। এই তিনজন—প্রমথলাল, বিনয়েন্দ্রনাথ ও মোহিতচন্দ্র। ‘প্রার্থনাসভা’র এই ‘ত্রয়ী’র জীবনগুলি চরিত্র-গৌরবে, নব নব গঠন-শক্তিতে ও সৃষ্টিতে,—সমৃদ্ধ।

তঁাহারা চরিত্র হইতে ধর্ম, শাস্ত্র, ও শিক্ষাকে পৃথক করিয়া দেখিতে পারিতেন না। ভগবৎ-জীবনের আত্ম-প্রকাশ ও ধর্মপ্রবর্তক মহাপুরুষদের আত্ম-প্রতিষ্ঠা হইতেই ভগবানের পরিচয়,—নবসমাজ ও নবসভ্যতার নব নব অভিব্যক্তি। সকল ধর্মই বিধান ও এক ধর্মবিকাশের অন্তর্গত—অখণ্ড-জীবনের খণ্ড-প্রকাশ। সেইজন্য সকল ধর্মই সত্য—অখণ্ড ভগবৎ-জীবনে ‘বহু একে’র বিচিত্রতাময় সামঞ্জস্য। ভগবৎজীবনের এই নবপরিচয়ই তঁাহার নববিধান।

তঁাহারা সত্য, শিব ও স্নন্দরের পূজারী ছিলেন। সত্য—এক, সর্ব ও সর্বাতীত; শিব—সর্বগত, সর্বত্র ক্রিয়াশীল, বিচিত্র রূপধারী ও ঘটে ঘটে বিরাজমান; স্নন্দর—বহুর বিচিত্র সমবায়ে একের আত্মপ্রতিষ্ঠা, সত্য ও শিবের আনন্দময়, সৌন্দর্যময় পূর্ণপরিচয়।

প্রমথলাল, বিনয়েন্দ্রনাথ, মোহিতচন্দ্র তিনজনই প্রাণীনালী, বিশ্বাসী সাধক। প্রমথলালের ভগবৎ-বিশ্বাসের অর্থ—ধর্মজীবনে নব নব দীক্ষা—অনন্তকালে নব নব জন্ম—ভক্তি ও পূজায় নব নব স্তরে উদ্বোধন। স্নগন্তরী, তপস্বী-প্রাণ বিনয়েন্দ্রনাথের প্রার্থনাসভার আলোকপ্রাপ্ত সাধনাধারা স্ননিয়ন্ত্রিত, বিচিত্র, স্নবিস্তৃত কর্মশ্রোতে প্রবহমান। মোহিতচন্দ্রের আবেগময় বিশ্বাসী জীবন,—সরল শিশুর জীবন; প্রকৃতি ও পরমাত্মার সহজ প্রকাশ, শিশুর নিকটে। তঁাহাদের প্রভাব জীবনে গভীরভাবে উপলব্ধ হইয়াছে, তঁাহাদের সহিত নিবিড় যোগের সৌভাগ্য ঘটিয়াছে,—জীবন-সন্ধ্যায় তঁাহাদের কথা বিশেষভাবে স্মরণে আসিতেছে।

প্রার্থনার যে আলোক একদিন ‘অন্ধকারের উৎস হইতে উৎসারিত’ হইয়া, অনন্ত জীবন-পথে তীর্থ-যাত্রীদের অগ্রসর করিয়া দিত—তাহা প্রজ্জ্বলিত রাধিবার ভার মণ্ডলীর নবীন উত্তরাধিকারীদিগের উপরে। এই নব-সাধনার দ্বারা অক্ষুণ্ণ রাধিবার জন্ত নব-জাতকের উদয় হউক!

—বেণীমাধব : ‘নব-যুগের সাধনা’

